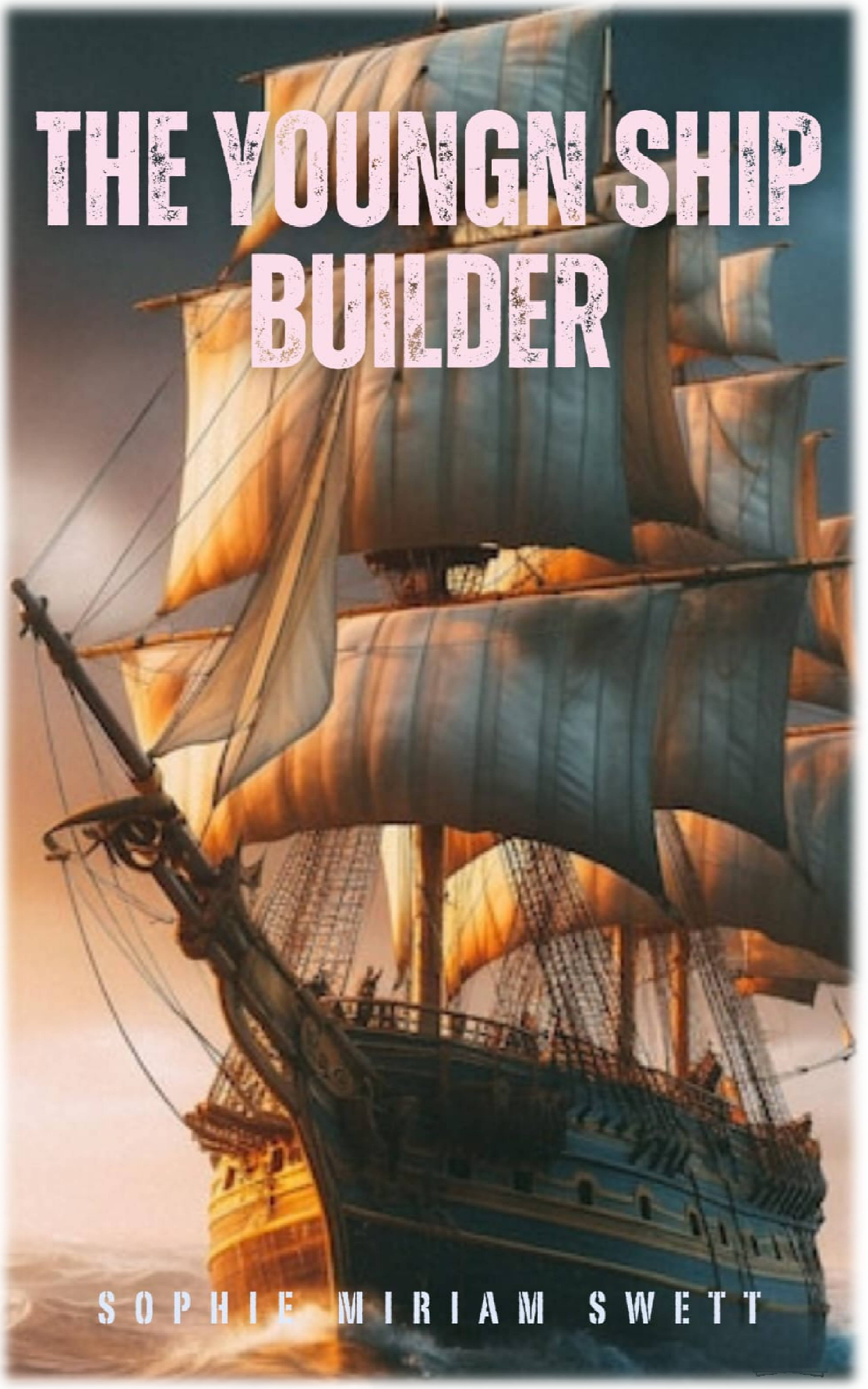
THE YOUNGN SHIP BUILDER
SOPHIE MIRIAM SWETT

The Young Ship Builder

BY SOPHIE SWETT

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CHAPTER I
WE AND THE "ALIENS"

IT might be thought that people who lived on Groundnut Hill, in Palmyra, would have no more story to tell than the needy knife-grinder, but as Hiram Nute, the essence-peddler, says, "Wherever there's human nater and the Lord's providence, there's apt to be consid'able goin' on."

Perhaps there was more "goin' on" in our family from the fact that the human nature is somewhat mixed. There is sure to be an astonishing variety in any large family, I have observed, even when there are not, as in ours,two sets of children. But the queer differences with us are all set down to the fact of mother's second marriage. She was Deacon Partridge's daughter, and she married the Rev. Cyrus Dill, who was the "stated supply" at Palmyra, the summer that she was nineteen. He received a call to a small church in a large city, and three children were born there, Cyrus, Octavia and I. I am Bathsheba. They named me after my Grandmother Dill, because she was a woman who feared the Lord. It was my father's behest, and was so set down in his will—he died just after I was born. The will was pasted into the family Bible. Every one said it was a beautiful will, because, while he had scarcely any material possessions, he yet bequeathed so much.

Grandma Partridge and my mother always cried over it on rainy Sundays, and to my infant mind it was a scarcely less sacred thing than the scriptures themselves.

When I was sixteen, I was so light-minded as to wish that Grandma Dill could have beena woman who feared the Lord and had a pretty name, too.

Long before that time grandma had to weep alone over the will, for mother had married the young artist who had pitched his white umbrella tent all summer on the green slope of our orchard, and painted old "Blue" in its brooding stillness, and with its shifting shadows, and the beautiful vista of the river through our Norway pines.

An artist! The name savored of unconventionality to grandma, and of shiftlessness as well, to grandpa. But they gave in—to mother's dimple—stern Uncle Horace said. He declared, furthermore, this severe relative of ours, that grandpa would never have been coerced by the dimple, if he had not been enfeebled in body and mind by his inveterate foe, asthma.

Grandma, we learned, as we grew up, was suspected of secretly favoring the match. She cried and feared that it was not marrying in the Lord, for the young artist had beenreared in a different faith from ours; but,—dear grandma!—she loved a romance. Stories were not favored in those days, by the strictest of the sect to which we belonged, and grandpa was of the strictest. She read them privately, sometimes, with a deep sense of guilt. When, by great good fortune—and some one's oversight—I found one in the Sunday-school library, she would ask me, with wistful eagerness, if it were "a pretty story." And although I never saw her read it, she knew "how it ended" while I was still at the beginning.

I suppose it was a pretty story, a very pretty drama of human life, that was played before grandma's eyes in that summer when Royce Dupont painted pictures on our orchard slope, and "leaf by leaf the rose of youth came back" to mother. And in spite of her religious misgivings—he had a bewildering veneration for the saints—and in spite of her loyalty to the dead, grandma had a furtive joy in it.

They were married in the autumn, and herartist husband took mother abroad with him, leaving the children, Cyrus and Octavia and me, to comfort and make things lively for grandpa and grandma. And our half-sister and half-brother were born in Paris. That is why Palmyra people will call them French children, although their father was an Englishman by birth and only from very remote ancestors was there a drop of French blood in his veins.

In less than five years mother came back widowed, to the Groundnut Hill farm, bringing with her Estelle and David, children of two and three. Cyrus was twelve by that time, and Octavia ten, and I was nine, a tall slip of a girl, loving my patchwork and my knitting, and to help Loveday stamp the butter, much better than I loved my book; and yet wrestling with many more problems than any one wot of under my sandy-thatched poll.

People said that I looked very much like my father, and perhaps that was why my mother clung to me with passionate, half-remorsefultenderness, and wished to take me with her when she married and went abroad.

Grandfather had set his face firmly against that. A vague impression remained with me, gathered, perhaps, from Loveday's remarks, that he did not wish to give me over to my stepfather's saints. I had seen his paintings of them, in strange robes of scarlet, violet and yellow; and Loveday had whispered darkly of idolatry, a phrase quite beyond my comprehension, but which made me cry in my bed at night for fear of the painted saints.

Loveday would read to me on Sunday afternoons about the homely fishermen who had left their nets upon the Galilean shores to follow in the footsteps of our Lord. She told me that these were the real saints, as they were on earth, and we could not hope to know how they looked in the blessed company beyond. I was comforted, but a horror of saints and of those who painted them remained with me for years.

I set down these childish vagaries becauseI think a story is only of value in so far as it is a transcript of real life, and I mean this to be as frank as if it were a diary, which no eyes but my own should ever see. And small things went far toward the shaping of character on Groundnut Hill—as they do everywhere in this dimly-apprehended scheme of things.

Something of my horror of those painted saints must have been in time swallowed up by curiosity, for I remember that when I was ten, a year after mother's return with our new brother and sister, I attempted to transform one of the boys into a saint, according to my unfading recollection of my stepfather's paintings, by draping his shoulders with some old yellow flannel that hung upon the clothes-line. It was out

on the wide lawn, and Cyrus was deep in his Latin book, lying under the great butternut tree. Three-year-old Rob, Uncle Horace's son, was there, for Uncle Horace had married late in life, when one would no more have expected tender emotionsto develop in him than one would have expected one of our Druid-like old Norway pines to blossom with wild roses, and his young wife had died, leaving him an infant son.

I draped the folds of yellow flannel about them in as stately a fashion as I could, but I must confess that there was no semblance of sainthood about them, nor even anything cherubic, as one might have expected of their baby faces. They insisted upon thinking I meant them to play king, and strutted about with grotesque airs. Loveday came out and reproved me sharply for having vain imaginations, and for not having forgotten the heathenish pictures; for to my shamefaced astonishment, she understood just what I was doing.

Dear Loveday! our spiritual, as well as our temporal welfare lay very near her heart. Perhaps the relation she bore to us could scarcely be understood outside of New England, and at that time even it was a survival of the customs of an earlier date—to say nothingof the fact that Loveday was unique. She was ignorant, she was full of prejudices and crude notions, and yet there has sometimes come to me, in these later years, a doubt whether Loveday's ignorance, with the intuitions with which love lighted it—love to God and man—were not better than all the wisdom of the schools.

She had been the "hired girl" when she was twenty; at forty she was the housekeeper, and the reins of domestic management, always held somewhat slackly in grandma's gentle hands, had slipped, almost without any one's consciousness, into hers.

And Hiram Nute still continued to woo her, as he had done twenty years before. "He hadn't never slacked up a mite on his courtin'," Loveday herself admitted. And our "hired man" was relieved of the tasks of churning, taking in the clothes and chopping wood, during Hiram's periodical visits, for Loveday would never permit him to come unless he made himself useful.

She said matrimony was an ordinance of the Lord, but there 'peared to be consid'able many that was ready to serve him that way compared to them that was ready to do their duty just where he had sot 'em. And as for seein' them blessed young ones brought up on saleratus bread and slim morals, she couldn't do it. This was by no means intended as a reflection upon grandma, but upon the "back folks," whom Palmyra was forced to depend upon for "help."

Grandma's hands were wholly filled now by the care of grandpa, whose feebleness increased year by year, and also, alas! by mother's need of her constant attention, for a delicacy of the lungs had developed in our mother, and her strength failed rapidly. She took her illness lightly, declaring that it was only the result of the change from the sunny south of France to bleak New England air. But even on the healthful Palmyra hills we knew the meaning of that dread word, consumption, and

we older children understoodwhen the neighbors whispered it to each other with bated breath.

Perhaps it may have been vague thoughts of that country to which I knew my mother was going soon, that made my mind revert to the painted saints. In spite of the ill-success of my first experiments, and in spite of Loveday's rebuke—for I was a wilful young person in those days—I took advantage of Cyrus' absorption in his book to try to make for him a costume similar to that in the pictures.

The shadows of the butternut tree were heavy; one shaft of yellow sunset light pierced them and fell directly upon the boy. Finally, becoming aware that I was dressing him in some fantastic way, he arose with—not a scowl, even at thirteen Cyrus was too dignified to scowl—but a sternly rebuking expression upon his face.

The shadows were heavy, as I have said, and the shaft of light was dazzling. In the one moment that he stood there I saw, with a thrill of mingled triumph and dismay, that Ihad evolved one of the painted saints. But not one of them had such a face as this! Of course, my later understanding comes to my aid in interpreting its expression, but it struck my childish mind with a sense of awe.

A narrow, dark face, heavily browed, and the high forehead overhung by masses of black hair as straight as an Indian's. Only our Cyrus, and we had always been obliged to admit that he was a homely boy! But it was an intense, ascetic, loftily spiritual face. Something in the absurd toggery, transfigured by the strange effect of light and shadow, and associated with my dim recollections of the saintly faces, had shown it to me vaguely as a child of ten could see it. Years afterward, when I saw a painting of St. John the Baptist on the wall of Estelle's studio, in a flash Cyrus came back to me, as he had looked that night under the old butternut tree.

St. John the Baptist! "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!"A prophet with a warning cry. And Cyrus, we used to think, was one who thought he knew exactly what the way of the Lord was.

But if I go on in this way the end of my story will slip in at the beginning; or at least I shall show what we all were so plainly that every one will see just what must have happened. For character is destiny, although it does sometimes seem as if circumstances got the upper hand!

Estelle, a toddling mite of three, in trying to make cheeses with her small pink skirts, as she had seen me do, for my diversions were apt to be of a more practical nature than the evolution of painted saints, had tipped herself over into a thistle-bed, just outside the gate, and was screaming lustily.

Cyrus threw off his robe and rushed to the rescue. He set the distracted little maid upon her feet, and extracted the thistle-spears from her corn-silk locks, with a not ungentle hand. But he looked and spoke sternly—so sternly that the child's piteous cries were redoubled.He led or rather dragged her toward the house, saying severely that bed was the place for naughty little girls. Strangely, as I thought, neither

mother, nor Loveday, nor grandma, nor even Viola Pringle, now installed as Loveday's assistant, appeared at the sound of the small, wrathful voice.

But the youngsters, Dave and Rob, showed themselves rescuing knights to the distressed damsel. They fell with sturdy fists upon Cyrus, who weakened, not so much from a desire to return to his Latin, as I was shrewdly aware, as from a discouraged feeling that the household discipline was somewhat lax.

The small boys installed the weeping little maid in their somewhat rickety little wagon, and drew her, shrieking with delight, up and down the garden path, between the rows of nodding hollyhocks.

There came a sudden, subdued cry for Cyrus from the door. He was wanted to run with all speed for the doctor. Mother hadhad a hard fit of coughing, and there was blood upon her handkerchief.

We thought but little of this, then, we children. Grandma was apt to be full of alarms. Moreover, we had the strong, odd, childish assurance that things must always come out right; founded in some strange prescience, is it? or only in the happy lack of life's experience? Surely things would turn out all right, and we would be quite happy again, although, sometimes, in desperate troubles, not until one had had a good cry.

But that was the beginning of the end. Very soon after we were motherless children, although grandma said we were not to feel so, but always as if she were looking down upon us from the sky. And she impressed this so firmly upon little Estelle's mind, that the next summer, when she was four, the child ran away, upon her chubby legs, and toiled almost to the summit of old "Blue," to get to Heaven and find mother. For old "Blue's" misty peak melted into the blue of the sky.

We were almost crazed with fear, for there was a tradition of wild-cats still upon the mountain. The whole town turned out to search for her, and it was late in the night when we found her. Footsore and rain-soaked and hungry, the child's only regret was that she had failed to find Heaven and mother. She wept for days, and would not be comforted. To this day I never hear the hymn about "The dizzy steep of Heaven" without associating it in my mind with the rugged ascent of old "Blue" and little Estelle's weary climb. Many steep ascents lay before the little feet that climbed that day, but it seemed likely that she would take them all alike gallantly and fearlessly.

"There's consid'able to that young one, anyhow." That was what Loveday said. Grandpa had never taken to "the new children," as he called them, but from the day of little Estelle's mountain-climb he liked her better.

"She may be some like our folks," he said,hopefully. "He's like his father—he'll be an alien among us always." And he shook his fine, old gray head solemnly over little Dave.

It was out on the porch, and grandma sat near him with her knitting. Dave—he was six then—suddenly raised an impertinent little grinning face over the porch

railing, as if he understood. Grandma leaned over and patted the little face playfully, tenderly, and stroked the curly-thatched head.

Grandpa's voice grew husky with its weight of evil prophecy:

"Mark my words! he'll bring trouble on himself and on the whole family after I'm gone. I depend on you, Cyrus, to do all you can for him."

Cyrus, seated upon the step, as usual with a book, looked up in a kind of bewildered surprise. Except to severely rebuke them for being noisy, and to keep his treasures carefully away from their predatory fingers, I think Cyrus had been scarcely conscious of the children's existence.

Now the blood rose slowly to his sallow face and departed, leaving it pale and set. Cyrus proverbially took things hard. Yet if grandpa had lived to give other warnings and charges, the impression that this charge had made might have faded—although Cyrus was tenacious, as well as intense. But grandpa died within a week, suddenly, of heart disease, caused by asthma, and Cyrus immediately took serious charge of little David's education and morals, and never minded the snubbings that he brought down on his devoted head from grandma, and even from Loveday, who didn't think much of a big boy's ideas of domestic discipline.

These two episodes, not very important in themselves—of my receiving an impression that connected Cyrus always vaguely in my mind with the saints and of grandpa's charge to Cyrus concerning little David—stand out in the background of my mind, because, I suppose, of their connection with crises and changes in our lives.

After grandpa was gone, Loveday recalled often his feeling about the "alien" children.

"There's own folks that ain't own folks, and strangers that is," said Loveday, sententiously. "The Lord knows best, and it's for us to do our duty."

CHAPTER II

CYRUS SACRIFICES HIMSELF FOR THE SAKE OF THE "ALIENS"

"I'VE thought it all over and there's no other way. I must give up going to college," Cyrus announced in his slow, positive way.

It was six years after grandpa had given him the charge to care for little Dave, for I must resist the great temptation to linger on the days when childhood filled the earth for us with "the light that never was on sea or land."

Those days seemed to come to an end all at once for Cyrus and Octavia, and even for me, when grandpa died. For financial trouble came and we feared losing even the dear old roof over our heads.

Grandpa had been a shipbuilder. The firm of David Partridge & Son was known all overthe State and, in fact, much farther than the State. Although the business of shipbuilding had declined in our State, even before grandpa entered it, yet he prospered for a time. The weaknesses of disease and old age caused his failure—the same causes that had made him yield to mother's dimple—at least so Uncle Horace solemnly declared. He had never yielded to Uncle Horace, but had always been determined to keep him in leading-strings and consequently, Uncle Horace had felt but little interest in the business, devoting himself to raising stock on his fine farm.

But when grandpa died, and his affairs were found badly involved, Uncle Horace immediately undertook to manage the business and retrieve the losses. And it was Cyrus, eighteen-year-old Cyrus, whom he consulted; they went over the books together. It was the family opinion that Uncle Horace and Cyrus were alike. They both had strong individualities and were extremely reserved andself-contained; otherwise I could never see any resemblance. Certainly Uncle Horace had never given them any reason to hope that their desire of making a minister of him would be accomplished, while almost from childhood Cyrus' bent had been in that direction, and we all understood that it was beginning to be his heart's desire.

I knew that grandma prayed every day that she might live to hear Cyrus preach the gospel; that Octavia self-denyingly saved her school-money—she had secured the Mile End school to teach by the time she was sixteen—and that Loveday made her clover-stamped, "gilt-edged" butter and the Groundnut Hill cheese, by which we were getting famous, all with the one idea of paying Cyrus' college expenses.

I even picked berries to make preserves to sell, with Estelle helping me until her chubby hands and arms were torn and bleeding from the blackberry thorns. She was as stout-hearted as an Indian and never complained.And we put the money into her red-apple bank to send Cyrus to college; and proud enough we both were.

After all that, after the sending of Cyrus to college had been the family impetus for years and Cyrus had been prepared at the Corinth Academy—I drove him over with old Abigail, the white mare, every day—with old Parson Grover to add the

finishing touches to his Latin and Greek, one may imagine how I felt to have Cyrus tell me, quietly, that he had decided not to go to college after all!

It was in the counting-room, down at the shipyard; shall I ever forget the day? It was summer and the sky with its clouds and the river with its sails were a lovely symphony in blue and white, with an atmosphere of breeze and sunshine. Some lumbermen on a raft were singing "Sweet Marie," and the children, Dave and Estelle, were shouting with glee as they tumbled off a teeter into the piles of soft and fragrant sawdust.

"You know I am slow," Cyrus continued,while I was trying to get my breath after the shock of astonishment I had felt when he told me that he was not going to college. He had arisen from the desk where he had been jotting down figures and stood, very erect and pale, by the window. He was only nineteen, but I thought admiringly that he already looked like a minister. "It would be a great while before I should have any success, if I ever did. And I couldn't think of going into the ministry to make money."

"Money!" I echoed in amazement. "Why, we are all getting where we can take care of ourselves!" And I wondered if he did not know that even I, whose talents were only domestic ones, was to supply the Palmyra canning factory with preserves and the new summer hotel with strawberries and eggs.

"The business isn't prospering," said Cyrus slowly. "Uncle Horace will never have any interest in it."

"You don't like it either," I said, and Cyrus permitted himself to make a little wearygrimace. But he caught himself up the next minute.

"It would be a pity to have it go out of the family," he said. "I can't help but think how grandfather would hate to have the business fail."

"He never seemed to think of that," I said. "He only wanted you to be a minister. Mother, too, wanted you to be one—like father."

Cyrus smiled a little bitterly, and pointed through the open window where Dave appeared upon a lofty teeter, high in the air, his slender figure outlined against the blue of the sky, the sunlight glinting on his curly yellow poll.

"We'll send him to college," he said. "See here!" He drew a letter from his pocket. "This is from his teacher, Miss Raycroft, saying she can do nothing with him, and I've had a polite suggestion from the committee that it would be just as well to keep him at home, as he disturbs the orderand discipline of the school by drawing pictures, chiefly caricatures, upon the books and walls and blackboards."

I was dumb with dismay. We knew that there was a little mischief in David. He would draw pictures; the fly-leaves of all the books that he used were spoiled, and travelers stopped to laugh at the grotesque figures in red chalk or black paint that adorned the barn door. But that Dave's mischief could be taken as seriously as this I had never expected.

“I’ve known that this was what it would come to,” said Cyrus gloomily. “You remember what grandfather said? It’s alien blood. They’ll never be like us, either of them.” Estelle’s side of the teeter was up now; her yellow curls were afloat in the heavenly ether, her gleeful laugh came ringing down to us. “She won’t mind what any one says to her, Loveday says, and I’ve noticed it, too.”

It struck me that Cyrus was taking thingstoo hard. It seemed a little funny, that a boy of his age should have thought so seriously about the misbehavior of children. Cyrus seemed to read my thoughts.

“You may think these are small things,” he said, “but they show the alien blood. We always behaved pretty well—even you.”

I dropped upon a stool. Cyrus did sometimes take one’s breath away. If a little mild indignation flamed in my bosom it was speedily quenched by a recollection of the time when Cyrus pulled me—almost by my hair—out of the mud pool in Quagmire swamp, where I had been strictly forbidden to go. I had a vague, painful suspicion that if I should rake up all the past I might be grateful to Cyrus for including me in the “pretty well-behaved,” in spite of his painfully qualifying “even.” The entry in my diary that night was the sage reflection that the impression of our misdeeds remained more strongly with others than with ourselves.

“This kind of behavior,” pursued Cyrus in a judicial tone, “means irresponsibility. They will have to be taken care of for a long time, if not for always. The New England energy and thrift will never be found there. The boy will think that making pictures is the business of life.”

“Sometimes it is. Pictures sell,” I ventured, feeling in myself a broadness of spirit that was almost reckless, and remembering, with a vague dismay, the painted saints.

“Only those by very great artists,” said Cyrus practically. “The rank and file of the profession are apt to be out at the elbows.”

I listened admiringly, he was so confident in wisdom, but I wondered dimly how he knew, for very few artists had ever found their way to Palmyra.

“You know how it was, once,” Cyrus continued hesitatingly. “Grandfather had to provide.”

I suppose I had gathered the fact vaguely, from the talk of my elders, but childhoodblessedly depreciates practical cares. And what more appropriate, as it seemed to me, than that grandpa, whom I thought the greatest potentate on earth, should pay everybody’s bills?

“I don’t disparage art,” continued Cyrus loftily, and I thought that sounded well whatever it might mean. “But I am looking at the practical side of things and I can’t help seeing that the aliens have got to be taken care of. We are, as you say, where we can provide for ourselves. I could work my way through college.” Cyrus was very tall as he said this. “But I must devote myself to the business. If that fails I must try

something else to provide for them. You know what I promised grandfather about him."

It was the boy who rankled. Cyrus had never liked him. Girls were, at best, an inscrutable evil; one learned to put up with them.

"But they don't cost much now," I said eagerly, "and the farm pays."

Cyrus shook his head. "Only fairly well. Leander Green manages it as well as it can be done, with Loveday's help."

"And mine," I added eagerly.

Cyrus' small, near-sighted eyes widened, and there was, I fancied, a flicker of a smile under his moustache; but the moustache was not as yet large enough to hide much of anything, so I decided to give him the benefit of the doubt, especially as he immediately said quite heartily:

"I know you do help, Bathsheba, and I am glad to see that you understand the work that properly belongs to a woman."

He might have been grandpa or dear old Parson Grover, only that neither of them had so much dignity. He reminded me of the answer that grandpa made him, once, when he asked if he (grandpa) was as old as he when a certain event happened.

"My dear Cyrus, I never was as old as you!" said grandpa.

"But there is no use in talking. You seehow it is!" Cyrus went on with a touch of impatience. "My duty lies here. I shall be a shipbuilder, of more or less success—I am afraid it will be less."

"It is a very great pity that mother married again!" said I.

I am always very outspoken when I am deeply moved. I expected that Cyrus would reprove me. Instead, he walked with hasty strides to and fro across the office, and an unwonted color flamed in his cheeks that were as swarthy, almost, as an Indian's.

"Those children are chains about our wrists, and they always will be!" he said, almost fiercely.

The screen door was suddenly flung open and the "chains" appeared. They were ten and nine, now, and a pretty pair, with our mother's blonde coloring. The girl had a vivacity, and they both had a supple grace that made them quite unlike the other Palmyra children, quite unlike what we had been at their age. It seemed un-Americanand was, perhaps, an inheritance from some remote French ancestor, or at least, from ancestors more accustomed to the gay world than were ours. There was a vague tradition that the artist, their father, was of lofty lineage. I had always felt that this unlikeness of the children to ourselves jarred upon Cyrus and Octavia, while to me it was a fascination.

"We made ourselves in the sawdust," announced Estelle, "and Dave came fat—as fat as a doughnut boy when he puffs all up in the pan. Perhaps it was because his sawdust was so fine and soft. But his clothes are big and baggy. They don't fit anyway."

The child had a fine scowl of scorn between her delicate brows as she looked at Dave's clothes, which, what with grandma's conscientious economy and Loveday's lack of tailor skill, certainly did all that clothes could do to conceal his lithe grace of form.

"I came as lean as a daddy-long-legs," added Estelle. "This is one of my skimpydresses. One good thing, it will wear out soon! Loveday said there must be two for me out of every one of Octavia's. Oh, how I wish Octavia didn't like purple and green!"

The dress was a cross-barred muslin, ugly of color and design. Octavia was near-sighted, devoted to books, and almost wholly indifferent to dress, and yet with a serene impression that she always looked well and a tendency toward striking effects.

"I've got through with the other one like this." The child heaved a long sigh of relief. "It got a beautiful great tear on a fence nail, so zigzag that even Loveday couldn't mend it. Oh, Bashie, you will get through with your blue spot soon, won't you, and the sash! The blue spot is so pretty and your dresses are so nice because they won't make two!" she said fervently, as she clung to my arm.

I had sometimes had a guilty sense of being too small to suit the household economies,but now I felt a sympathetic satisfaction that there would be but one dress of the blue spot.

"Can't you get a little sense into her head, Bathsheba?" said Cyrus, wearily, and with a severe glance at the graceful little figure in its ungainly hugely-flowered gown.

Estelle, alas! promptly made a face at him, one of her naughtiest, most mocking and defiant. One would scarcely have believed that there could be such wicked gleams from such soft, blue eyes!

And Dave took from his pocket a weapon known to Palmyra as a bean-slinger with which it was his habit to promptly avenge Estelle. I drew the children hastily away.

"They are only children," I said aside to Cyrus. But he was not in a mood to take them lightly. The situation, which it seemed to me that he exaggerated, was evidently very real and bitter to him. He was giving up his heart's desire, he was giving himself to monotonous, uncongenial work,and to-day, at least, he could not be called the cheerful giver whom the Lord loveth.

I was sick at heart and rebellious against Providence for Cyrus' sake. It was an overturning of the proper, the natural order of things that he should not go to college and be a minister. As long as I could remember I had known that this was to be Cyrus' lot in life. The plan had been sealed by the sacred wish of the dead. We all bore with Cyrus' sometimes excessive assumption of dignity—what Uncle Horace permitted himself to call "bumptiousness"—on this ground. We felt that the children must not be allowed to make a noise when he was reading or studying, Loveday felt that he must have fine pocket handkerchiefs and the lion's share of the preserves. And this

was not because he was the finest scholar at the Academy, proud as we were of that fact, nor yet because dear old Mr. Grover had told us, with a quaver of tearful joy in his voice, that Cyrus' Latin verses were wonderful, that never before hadhe known such Latin verses to be written by a boy of his age. No, it was because Cyrus was going to be a minister. We reverenced the calling. I think there was an especial reverence for it in Palmyra, and we felt it the more because our great-grandfather had been the first minister of the town and it was also sacred to us as the calling of the father whom we had never known.

Cyrus seemed almost a minister already. Had not he been called upon to lead the prayer meeting one evening when the minister was away and Deacon Barstow had a sore throat? And although Octavia was pale with fear lest he should break down or say something that he ought not, and I felt grandma's little frame beside me shake like a leaf in the wind, yet Cyrus was calm and dignified, and every one said that he did beautifully and exclaimed, "What a minister he will make!"

And after all Cyrus was not going to be a minister! There was a strangling lump inmy throat and my eyes smarted with unshed tears as I tried to look, at Estelle's vehement bidding, at the depressions that their small bodies had made in the heaps of fresh and fragrant sawdust.

These impressed me suddenly with a vague resemblance to little graves, and with a swift revulsion of feeling I seized the children and hugged them. They might be little "aliens" and they were costing much, but I loved them.

"You were very, very naughty to Cyrus," I said to Estelle, who was not very responsive to sentiment at the best, and was now unpleasantly sticky from peanut taffy. "If you knew, if you understood, I am sure you couldn't be. He is very good and very unhappy. He isn't going to be a minister!"

The lump in my throat choked me now, but I had to conquer it, for we were out of the shipyard and walking in the road, where curious eyes might see my tears.

"Cyrus isn't going to be a minister?"repeated Estelle, reflectively. "Well, I shouldn't think it would be much fun anyway; though people would give him all their nice things when he was invited to tea. I would much rather be a tin-peddler, or an essence-peddler, then I could put drops of essence of peppermint on all my lumps of sugar."

"Why is a girl always so greedy?" inquired Dave, dispassionately. "But, really, when you come to think of what jolly things there are to do—killing Indians, and riding buffaloes, and being a pirate like Captain Kidd, it does seem kind of queer that a fellow should want to be a minister! But, then, it's just like Cyrus to want to tell people what they ought to do and how bad they are when they can't talk back."

And these were children who went to Sunday-school, who read their verses and said their prayers every day! I felt a chilling dismay. I knew that it was not easy to recall the real ideas of one's childhood, butsurely we had never been like these small heathens!

“Oh, don’t you know, can’t you understand, that to teach people the gospel, to help them to be good, is better, higher than any of those things?” I cried, with desperate earnestness.

“Could Cyrus make people good?” asked Estelle reflectively. “He makes me bad some way; worse than anybody does, except Iky Barstow who calls me a hopper-grass. And then he thinks I am bad all the time, when I am really kind of mixed.”

“He thinks a fellow ought to like ’rithmetic,” said Dave meditatively, winding the string about his top, as we walked along, “and chop wood instead of going fishing. I suppose that’s the way all ministers begin,” he added, wagging his yellow head solemnly—as if preaching were the result of a long indulgence in erroneous opinions.

“But he’s got to be a minister, you know,” said Estelle, stopping suddenly in the roadand giving a final severe twist to the rope that she had made of her apron—she was a nervous little thing, and tried Loveday’s patience by knotting and twisting her strings and her clothes. “He’s got to, because there’s our berry money in my bank. I—I put my bantam money in there, too.”

The color came and went in the child’s face as I gazed at her.

“Yes, that was why I sold my bantams. I didn’t tell. I wanted Cyrus to be a minister so much. I guess I was better last year. I had a temptation last week to spend the money for chocolate creams and a parasol with lace on it. But I couldn’t smash the bank because your berry money was in it, too. We’ll go back and tell Cyrus about the money and then he’ll know he must go to college and be a minister.” She seized my arm in her imperative little way.

“No, we won’t go back to Cyrus,” I said. “But I am going to see Mr. Grover, and you may go with me if you like. I want him totell Cyrus that he isn’t seeing things in the right light.”

I talked to the child, partly because my overfull sixteen-year-old heart must find an outlet, partly because I wished to soften her heart towards Cyrus and make her feel, so far as a child could, the sacrifice he was making.

“He thinks it is his duty to take care of you and Dave,” I said bluntly. In my exalted mood of pity for Cyrus I felt as if she ought to know it.

“Take care of us? Mercy! That would be worse than having Loveday. And how ridiculous! Why I darned one of his stockings last week, myself. Loveday showed me. I wanted to, because you put a china egg into the toe.”

I sighed impatiently. Were all children as stupid as this? Had I been mistaken in thinking her intelligent?

But she was silent as we walked up the minister’s garden path and in the shadow ofthe tall old elm trees I saw the color come and go upon her sensitive little face.

Dave had caught sight of the Barstow boys and gone in pursuit of them.

The old minister had just come out upon the porch to rest in the shade, but he didn't look in the least as if we disturbed him. He took off his straw hat to me as if I were sixty instead of sixteen, and he kissed Estelle's sticky little hand.

But when I had told him my trouble, plunging headlong into the subject, as was my habit, for the first time in my life Parson Grover disappointed me.

"Cyrus has talked the matter over with me, my dear, and I think the boy is quite right," he said. "When God has filled our hands with duties he doesn't mean us to go in search of others."

Here was Loveday's doctrine again! "People should do their duty where the Lord had sot 'em!"

"Surely you don't think there is only oneway to serve Him," added the old man gently. "The fields white for the harvest are of many kinds and often, often they lie close to the reaper's hand."

He said much more about the impossibility of knowing in what direction Cyrus' talent might lie, while he was still so young, of the development that resulted from doing one's simple duty, and of the Guiding Hand that never failed.

And I was comforted a little, if I was not altogether convinced.

"Would it make Cyrus like Mr. Grover to be a minister?" inquired Estelle, when we had walked half way homeward in silence. "I shall find out whether the blackberries are ripe in the Notch pasture to-morrow, and I shall get old Mrs. Trull to let me pick her geese at Christmas to earn money."

The child's little peaked face was aglow with eagerness. But I was not thinking of her then.

I went to Uncle Horace that very afternoon.He was the trustee of grandpa's estate and the guardian of us all. I asked him just how things were and if it were necessary for Cyrus to give up going to college.

Uncle Horace looked at me with a quizzical smile from under his great shaggy eyebrows.

"I went to college," he said. We were in his office at the stock farm, and he pointed to his diploma hanging among the prints of fine horses and cattle.

"But Cyrus is different," I said with only half-smothered indignation. "He wants to be a minister. Grandpa meant that he should be a minister."

Uncle Horace's face darkened and he drummed on the table with his long, heavy fingers.

"I don't see how it could be managed, just as things are," he said. "And he has a head for business; that is, he knows that two and two make four, which is more than can be said of most boys of his age. And he hasmastered the details already, so that he would be a real loss. He isn't very quick at his books, either; he would never make his mark as a scholar or a preacher. Oh, yes, I know about the Latin verses, but they don't prove much of anything. There is no market for Latin verses."

A market for them, as if they were beeves or swine!

I was so full of indignation that I went away without a word. Uncle Horace called after me from the doorway:

"I'll tell you who will have to be sent to college, because he'll never be good for anything without it. Cyrus knows it as well as I do. It's that little Dave."

CHAPTER III
A LITTLE ALIEN'S WOES

IT was Dave who was to go to college. Cyrus was resolutely determined to sacrifice himself to the little "aliens" and to the carrying on of grandfather's business. And since he was aided and abetted by Uncle Horace, and even dear old Parson Grover, who had sympathized with Cy's desire to be a minister, declared that "the boy was quite right," there was clearly nothing for the rest of us to say.

Grandma had grown somewhat childish by this time—as well as being childlike and lovely, as she always was—and wept for joy that Cyrus was not going away where his food might not be wholesomely prepared or his flannels properly aired. We had planned to break the shock of disappointment to her bytelling her that it was thought that Cyrus had great business abilities and the shipbuilding might prosper, as it had done in the old times. But neither the ministry, for which she had so longed for Cyrus, nor the business were of so much consequence to grandma now, as was the fact that Cyrus would be at home and could play checkers with her in the evenings. He was so patient!—leaving his books without a murmur, although he had but little time for them now, and exercising an ingenuity to allow her to beat him, which I am sure would have constituted him a "champion" player.

Octavia was utterly dismayed. She had thought Cyrus was like our father, for whose memory she cherished a deep reverence, and on that account it was a matter of course that he should be a minister. Octavia had family pride and she thought it fitting that the family which gave its first minister to Palmyra should continue to furnish ministers rather than shipbuilders to the world.

She was deeply religious, too, and she seemed to fear that the god of this world had blinded Cyrus' eyes to his duty, and blinded ours as well, that we could be resigned to his defection.

"Dave or Rob may be a minister," I said hopefully. "Cy is planning already, to send Dave to college, and Rob will go, too, although just now Uncle Horace sneers at colleges."

"It seems likely that it will be Dave who will be the minister!" said Octavia, who permitted herself to be sarcastic upon occasion. It had cut her dreadfully that Dave had been expelled from school for mischief.

"No one can tell when a boy is ten, what he may become," I said with indignation. But my heart was heavy. I was driving Octavia to school and it was a dreary morning. Old Abigail's white shape loomed ghostly through a heavy fog. Octavia's long thin face looked white and melancholy, under the limp roses on her hat. There is nothing likea fog to make you feel your troubles and show them, too, and we have the heaviest of fogs on our river.

But I added, more lightly than I felt: "A little mischief like Dave's doesn't count."

“It’s the alien blood I’m afraid of,” Octavia responded. “His father was so—so different from us. And he hasn’t that sense of responsibility that Cyrus had, even at his age. As for Rob, I’m afraid his asthmatic tendency will always make him delicate. Of course we have always thought Cyrus the hope of the family. And we have always known that the children would be a trouble—but to ruin ourselves for them, like this——!”

Octavia was growing vehement—we are all a little inclined to be that at times—but my attention was diverted from her by a sudden little jerking of the wagon from behind. It was the canopied beach wagon. Estelle liked to sit in the back with her long legs dangling out. Octavia had decreed that she should not drive as far as her schoolhouse with us unlessshe would sit properly upon the seat. I saw the small graceful figure spring out at the turn of the road. It did not run, and no gleeful laugh of defiance came back to us. It was a limp and dejected little figure that pulled its hat over its eyes as it walked.

“That child again,” said Octavia, following my gaze with an annoyed expression. “She never pays the least attention to what is said to her! Some day she will get hurt, jumping out in that way. And how it looks!”

“But Octavia, she must have heard,” I exclaimed in dismay.

“Heard what?” said Octavia, who, although she was a teacher, had no perception of the acuteness of children, at least of this child.

“About alien blood, and—Dave. That they were a trouble, and that we were ruining ourselves for them!” I replied with some irritation.

“She wouldn’t understand if she did hear,” said Octavia easily. “You exaggerate thosechildren’s intelligence, Bathsheba. If she had understood I should almost think it would be a good thing for her. She really ought to have a little realizing sense of what is being done for her! I was a responsible human being when I was nine. Even you were more sensible than she is.”

Even me! There it was again! We are a frank family.

“If being responsible in tender years makes one hard and unfeeling when one grows up, I hope I wasn’t so,” I answered tartly.

Octavia said not another word, for she never will quarrel nor bicker. I wasn’t quite just. Octavia isn’t hard; she is only slow of perception and doesn’t readily put herself into other people’s places. Is not a lack of sympathy in good people often only a lack of imagination?

I was unjust, but I couldn’t express any contrition, my heart was so sore. I felt that there were, at this moment, heavy woes weighing upon the little sensitive spirit whosetoo keen ears took in every word of its elders, as few people realize that a child’s ears ever do.

On my way back I was tempted to stop at the schoolhouse and ask the teacher to allow Estelle to go home with me. It seemed cruel to let the little sore heart go uncomforted. But on second thought I refrained. In view of Dave’s misdemeanors I

disliked to do anything that might make the children troublesome to their teachers. After all, childhood's impressions were fleeting. The romp at recess might drive away all painful thoughts.

In fact when the child came home her face was bright, and I dismissed my misgivings. But that night I was awakened from sleep by a piteous little voice, close at my ear, that said, "Bashie, what is alien? I can't sleep for thinking."

I sprang up. "It's a nasty, horrid word that means—that doesn't mean much of anything, dearie!" I said, and I tried to draw her into bed and make her cuddle down byme, as she did sometimes when a whippoorwill—which she never liked—sang persistently on the roof, or a screech-owl—"nowls" she called them—hooted in the Balm of Gilead tree by her window. But she would not come. She stood there, in her little white nightgown and a moonbeam fell across her face and showed the hair all tossed back from her high forehead, as Loveday said she always pushed it back when she was full of naughtiness.

"It means—it means that Dave and I don't belong here like the rest of you!" she said. "We're the other family. The children at school say so! And we're a trouble to you! We're why Cyrus can't go to college and be a minister. You said so yourself!"

I remembered that I did say so and I could have bitten my tongue out for my brutal carelessness.

When "the leaves of the judgment books unfold" and the countless stabs of careless tongues are revealed, we may be guiltilyamazed to see how deeply they have pierced the children's hearts.

"And she said"—went on the piteous little voice, "Octavia said that we hurt you—spoiled everything! Bashie, is it true? Is that what children do when they are aliens?"

Of course I tried to comfort her with soft words. I drew her in beside me and cuddled her. There were strangling sobs in my throat and my eyes were wet, but she was quiet and tearless.

"She's jest as still and sot as the meetin' house," Loveday was in the habit of saying. Loveday had never even heard of Hosea Bigelow! "She's more'n all these, as the boys say, but 'tain't easy to make her out, and she ain't a-goin' to down her head for nobody!"

Estelle fell asleep after an hour or more and then sighs and broken sobs came from her lips; and she tossed about restlessly all night as if with troubled dreams. I was only sixteen, and sixteen in Palmyra is not so old asit is where life flows in broader channels, but I knew enough of life to make my heart yearn over the proud little soul that would always carry an undaunted front to the world—and get the deeper scars thereby, though so bravely hidden.

Many times, in the years that came after, I remembered that night and its sequel. There seemed likely to be no sequel, the next morning. The child was like herself and apparently only careful and troubled about her white turkey, that had an

irresponsible habit of leading her delicate brood into far pastures where thunder-storms might be their death. Dave, it must be admitted, was of but little help to her in the arduous business of turkey-raising. He took its difficulties lightly and made himself very unpleasant to the gobbler. Her usual small but exacting affairs seemed to engross Estelle that morning, but the next morning we discovered that there had been a mysterious disappearance!

Two small beds had not been slept in, andneither Dave nor Estelle were to be found. Viola was sent by Loveday to call them when it was long past breakfast time—for Loveday had a weakness about letting them lie in bed, declaring that only "ingy-rubber legs" could stand the running that they did. Viola returned wide-eyed and with her face so pale that the freckles stood out upon it like little spatters of mud.

"They're gone, ma'am!" she shouted in grandma's ear. "They're all gone, for their little clothes are all pulled over and they must each have took a bundle!"

And the idea of a bundle seemed so to impress Viola with the finality of their departure that she threw her apron over her head and gave way to violent weeping.

Then began as great a panic in the house and in the town as on that other day when Estelle had climbed old "Blue" to find Heaven and her mother. For a while the only information we could gather was to the effect that a drover, crossing the bridge to Palmyrashortly after eleven o'clock, the night before, had seen, by the light of a waning moon, two small figures going in the opposite direction. One small figure had fled in evident alarm at sight of his cattle. This was positive identification. The only two things of which Estelle admitted that she was afraid were thunder and cows.

Parties had started for the other side of the river in hot pursuit of the little fugitives when Uncle Horace was seen to put forth from the farther shore in his rowboat with what seemed to be two small persons in the stern. Loveday, who had repaired with the old spy-glass to the upper piazza, descried a glint of yellow locks and, presently, Estelle's Sunday hat with the tall white feather. Even in her stress of emotion the child had not been able to forego the tall white feather that had been her joy.

At about the same time a shout went up from the party on the bridge and Cyrus and I heard it, as we were distractedly climbingold "Blue" forcing our way into thickets and peering down the sides of precipitous rocks.

When we were certain that they were safe, Cyrus, I regret to say, became a little cross.

"One might think it was enough to be the burden that they are without making themselves a constant plague!" he said.

"She is such a sensitive little thing," I murmured apologetically.

"Sensitiveness is very apt to be only another name for vanity and selfishness," said Cyrus sharply.

"Cyrus, they are only children," I said indignantly. But Cyrus was wiping his near-sighted eyes that smarted from the strain and the exposure to the unusually hot

September sun, and would not listen to me. He strode off to the shipyard without waiting to hear where the wanderers had been or how it had fared with them.

Grandma kissed them and cried over them and insisted upon giving them flaxseed teaand cough-drops. Loveday gave them their breakfast with a face of stern displeasure—but she made the griddle-cakes that they loved, which was just like Loveday.

"We had to, we were such a trouble and we didn't belong here." That was the only explanation that Estelle vouchsafed to give, and that was only to me.

"We went to find aliens, like us," she said. That was when I had her all to myself in the seclusion of the orchard. "I was afraid they were something like Indians, but Dave said they must be some kind of French, because we were born in France. Dave didn't want to go but I made him. Then he would come back. Sometimes he is a very stubborn person." The little transparent brow wrinkled itself anxiously over this astonishing peculiarity of Dave's—whom, although he was nearly two years her senior, she had always kept in leading-strings.

After a pause Estelle continued: "We were going to the Port to find a ship to takeus to France, but when we came in sight of Uncle Horace's house there was a light in Rob's window. It was after eleven o'clock—it is so long before Leander stops snoring," and it was our hired man's boast that while he snored he was never sound asleep but could hear every footfall in the house—"so we knew that Rob must be having one of his bad times with asthma. Dave feels orfly when Rob has those, you know, and Rob always wants him to tell him pirate stories. It's queer that Rob never reads those stories himself nor ones about giants; but when he has the asthma he wants Dave to tell him about pirates and giants and about the old witch that had three elegant daughters. I told Dave that story myself. Well, Dave wouldn't go on. When we got so near that we could hear Rob's horrid, hard breathing through his open window, Dave just blubbered. He ran up and pounded on the door and Uncle Horace himself let him in and said he was orfly glad he had come. UncleHorace doesn't like us, either; I suppose because we're aliens.

"He scowled fearfully when he saw me and the bundles. Then he laughed a little. Some people hurt your feelings worse when they laugh than when they scowl. 'So you are at the bottom of this—this little midnight excursion?' he said to me. And he said something to Dave out of the Bible; something about Adam letting Eve make him eat the apple. I think he was the more mad with me because he was disappointed that Dave hadn't come on purpose to see Rob. He wants everybody to think everything of Rob although he is often very cross to him himself."

I thought the nine-year-old eyes were quite too keen, and it was a relief when she enforced her position by adding, "Octavia says so, anyway."

"He took away our bundles and Marcella, the housekeeper, put me to bed. It was in the next room to Rob's and I could hear hisbreathing and hear Dave telling the stories. I went to sleep and woke up again and he was still going on—such a sleepy-

head as Dave is, too. He will do anything for Rob; he always would, even before his asthma was so bad. If he catches a big trout he lets Rob pretend that he caught it, and he tried to get me to do Rob's arithmetic for him, when it was cheating. He would have done it himself if he could. And yet for himself I don't think Dave ever cheats. You see, it is very hard for me to keep Dave straight when Rob isn't—well, isn't so very particular." The little peaked face was grave with responsibility.

"Are you the girl who persuaded her brother to run away?" I said solemnly.

She burst into tears, and threw her arms around my neck.

"Was it bad when I only wanted to get where we belonged, and weren't in the way?" she said. "And I left my berry and my bantam money behind, in my apple bank,in hopes that Cyrus would go to college after we were gone."

I talked to her for a long time, but I could see that I influenced her only when I told her what a great helper she could be to us all. When I convinced her of that she smiled like an April sun and promised never to run away again. And from that day it was pitiful to see her wait upon and try to propitiate Cyrus, who either was or assumed to be as loftily unconscious of her present attentions as he had been of her previous "making faces."

This was the only result of the children's troublesome escapade, except that we were careful never to speak of them as "aliens" again, and we all of us had, I think, a little snugger place for them in our hearts, even Uncle Horace, although he shook his head and said the girl showed that she had something besides Partridge-blood in her veins.

I am not sure whether the comradeship between Dave and Rob increased from thattime, or whether we only observed it more. But they were constantly together and Estelle, I knew, still kept an increasing vigilance over the trout-catching and the arithmetic. She was extremely quick at mathematics, herself, and she really succeeded in making Dave ambitious in that direction, but chiefly, I think, that he might be able to help Rob by fair means.

Rob was hindered so much by his attacks of asthma that it was difficult to say whether he was really dull or only backward. Dave, although less than two years his senior, was reluctantly preparing for college while Rob was still in the grammar school. Cyrus had by this time set his heart upon having Dave go to college.

There had been no more expulsions from school and he was more than a fairly good scholar. The days when he covered all available surfaces with chalk or paint or pencil drawings were long since over. In fact it was not long after the running away that Icame upon Estelle as she thrust into the blazing wood-fire her plump and precious, though dilapidated, Mother Goose book. I rescued it thinking the child would surely repent so dreadful a sacrifice.

"No, I mean it," she said firmly, although tears were running down her cheeks. "I told Dave I would if he would not draw any more except the drawing-book lessons. See I—I did those."

On the margin of the leaves of the Mother Goose book figures were drawn, droll little old women, bunchy babies, cats and dogs and hens. Only one thing struck me, then, that the drawings were very queer, that they were unlike the drawings of the Palmyra children.

She looked at me with a wistful inquiry as I turned over the leaves. When I had finished she gripped the fat little well-thumbed book firmly and laid it again upon the glowing coals.

"You like to draw then, don't you?" Isaid sympathetically, for the struggle was pitiful.

She nodded, with firmly compressed lips. Then she turned her back upon the burning book and said in a voice sternly kept from shaking:

"It's a waste of time; Loveday says so. And it may lead to worser things—smoking and cheating."

"But you are not likely to do those things," I said, struggling for control of myself between laughter and tears.

"Oh, I am thinking of Dave!" she said with surprise at my stupidity. "It is to stop him from drawing that I have given it up."

This sacrifice had apparently produced an effect, for Dave's good behavior and attention to his books dated from about that time.

He passed his college examination successfully. We even whispered a hope to one another that Dave would become a minister. There was no sarcasm about it now; evenCyrus forbore to be a wet blanket when I ventured to express the hope to him.

All through Dave's first year in college we had encouraging accounts of him. If there was nothing especially brilliant about his scholarship, and if he were paying a little more attention to athletic sports than Cyrus approved of, at least he was behaving well, and even showing something of the religious instinct that might be expected to be his inheritance from a long line of devout ancestors—on his mother's side.

So it was, that what happened only two months after the beginning of his sophomore year was a blow that came upon us like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky.

Rob had been sent to a preparatory school in the same town with Dave's college. We had heard that Rob was ill and had feared to hear worse tidings from him. But it was the unexpected that happened.

CHAPTER IV
THE FAMILY DISGRACED

IT was on Thanksgiving Day—of all times!—that the blow fell.

We thought a great deal of Thanksgiving on Groundnut Hill. No grief, or change, or low estate was ever allowed to interfere with our joyous feasting, nor I hope with our thankfulness. If the latter ever did fail it was not because our dear ones had gone away to the better land, or because the wolf—that dreadful, traditional wolf—was nearing our door; it was when Dave came home at that Thanksgiving time!

At first we were delighted, although we younger ones soon recognized the fact that his explanation of his change of plans was embarrassed and unsatisfactory. Cyrus' face had darkened as soon as Dave opened thedoor, although he was genial with the good-will of the season and, we more than half suspected, from the fact that Alice Yorke was spending the Thanksgiving holidays with Estelle. It quite took away one's breath to think that Cyrus would look twice at a girl, but we all saw, or fancied we did, that he thought Alice Yorke different altogether from other girls.

Cyrus didn't think that Dave had any right to come home without asking leave anyway. And perhaps he ought not, since he had arranged to stay with Rob, who was not strong enough to bear the journey home, having just recovered from a severe bout with his old enemy, asthma, which we had hoped, and the doctor thought, he had outgrown.

Thanksgiving eve was rainy and blustering. After nightfall the rain changed to sleet and was flung against the windows by angry gusts of wind. Dave had walked from the station, and he looked as if he were clad in a glittering coat of mail when he opened the backdoor directly into the great kitchen. I thought the glitter was what made his face look so pale.

We had come out into the kitchen after supper, Estelle and Alice Yorke and I, for Hiram Nute had come up on his semi-annual visit, and we had not quite outgrown our childish delight in inspecting his wares. Always at Thanksgiving Loveday permitted him to accept grandma's standing invitation to pay a visit to the farm. There was a regular ceremony attending these visits, arranged, I am sure, by Loveday.

He presented grandma with a bottle of essense of peppermint, one of us girls with a bottle of perfumery of his own manufacture—selection of the receiver presumably made by Loveday,—and Cyrus with a bottle of bear's oil for the hair. This latter presentation must have been, we thought, a concession made by Loveday to his own weakness, for she well knew that Cyrus' whole soul revolted from hair oil. I was convinced of Cyrus' growthin grace when I saw him receive this tribute amiably and only surreptitiously present it to Leander Green.

Another inevitable ceremony attending the Thanksgiving visit was Hiram's tuning of the old parlor organ, which had been relegated to the hall as long ago as when mother's piano had come into the parlor. Cyrus played on it, sometimes, by ear,

and we used it when the choir rehearsed at our house; and Loveday felt a comfortable pride in having Hiram keep it in good order. Hiram was a Jack-of-all-trades. He called it having "a talent for combernations."

"This trade or that may fail ye, but get ye a good combernation and there ye be," Hiram was continually saying.

The hair was growing sparse and gray on Hiram's long, narrow head in these days, and his Adam's apple was more prominent, but otherwise he was the Hiram of our childhood and I for one had never ceased to hail his coming with delight.

The bottle of perfumery had been presented to Octavia this year. Loveday insisted upon strict impartiality, although Octavia was known to be of the opinion that the best of all smells is no smell. And Cyrus—Cyrus, who never condescended to linger in the kitchen—had come out ostensibly to receive his bear's oil, really as I believed, because Alice Yorke was there.

He was actually making a little joke about the hair oil—Cyrus, who in all his twenty-eight years had scarcely been known to make a joke—and his dark, ascetic face was all alight as his eyes rested on Alice Yorke, when the door opened suddenly and Dave stood there in the suit of glittering mail that seemed to make his face so white.

Cyrus' face darkened like a thunder-cloud, but he had to seem to share in the delight that we all showed. Every one ought to be at home Thanksgiving eve, and Dave was such a dear, lovable fellow, even if we older ones had never quite rid ourselves of the feelingthat he was not one of us and that we didn't quite understand him. We assailed him with a confused chorus of questions. How had he happened to come, after all? Was Rob better? And why did he not come, too? And why had he not let us know he was coming, that we might meet him at the station?

He was embarrassed and reticent, but then Dave was always provokingly reserved at times. It remained uncertain whether Rob was better or not, and why he didn't come, too. But then Rob's illness was always a painful subject to Dave; it was a Damon and Pythias affair with those two, an affection that had grown with their growth and strengthened with their strength.

When Uncle Horace had persisted in his determination to send Rob away to school, somewhat against his will, having apparently changed his mind about the advantages of a college education and being certainly ambitious for Rob, as he had never been for himself, we knew that he depended upon Dave totake care of him. He never admitted this, for he was sensitive about Rob's delicacy of constitution and as severe and exacting with him as if he were strong.

Dave was a big blond fellow now, as tall as Uncle Horace, and so healthy and handsome and wholesome that it did one's heart good to look at him. I could see, sometimes, that the contrast between Dave and his puny Rob cut Uncle Horace to the heart.

The dear boy was a little queer and constrained to-night. For a while his manner cast a chill even upon my heart, and I am the optimistic one. But I reflected that it is not easy to explain yourself to a whole kitchen full of people and before a strange girl with the very brightest eyes you ever saw! And it is, of course, still less easy when your severe older half-brother, who acts as your mentor and pays your bills, is frowning at you in plain sight of the bright eyes.

When grandma had given him her welcome the color came into the dear boy's face, and Iwas proud to have Alice Yorke see how handsome he was. We of the first family were all plain. We all have a nose that belongs to the Partridge stock and we don't like it any the better because it is said to have come to this country in the first ship after the Mayflower. It is a nose that has certainly shown the true Pilgrim spirit of persistence. Dave and Estelle both have features of classic regularity. Indeed a summer visitor to Palmyra had scandalized Loveday by calling Dave a young Greek god. She said that "if he wa'n't always all that a boy ought to be she didn't want it said that he favored heathen mythologers."

Alice Yorke had never seen him. She was a new friend of Estelle's, having only lately come to Palmyra to live. Her father was a doctor and had taken the practice of old Dr. Fogg, who had been gathered to his fathers the summer before. She was just Estelle's age—eighteen—a brunette with irregular features, a little "tip-tilted" nose and a widemouth, with tiny uneven milk-white teeth. Nothing about her was remarkable except a pair of black eyes that were deep and soft and bright, all at once. She had a fascinating little lisp and seemed simple-hearted and childlike. Loveday said that she had "a way with her." The quality which we call charm is always indescribable.

We were merry enough that night, and if I caught sight now and then of a cloud upon Dave's face, it was generally when Cyrus' near-sighted eyes were fixed upon him in a severely scrutinizing way that they had.

Alice Yorke had a light and sweet little voice, full of sentiment, such as I have only heard elsewhere in so great a degree in an Irish voice, and which one, strangely, never hears except in a youthful voice. She sang the old songs and hymns that grandma liked, "Flow Gently, Sweet Afton," "Mary of the Wild Moor," "How Happy is the Man Who Hears Instruction's Warning Voice," and "Gently Lord, Oh, Gently Lead Us." Andgrandma joined in at the last, in her high-keyed, quavering old voice, which still had a pathetic trace of sweetness, like that which lingers in the higher tones of a worn-out harp.

Cyrus sang, too, and his strong bass seemed to uphold the light soprano, as the ether upholds the fluttering bird.

"I have such a slight voice," Alice Yorke said, turning to Cyrus at the close of a song with a pretty deprecating air.

"But I never heard a sweeter one," he answered. And we did think that Cyrus was coming on!

I caught the flicker of a smile under Dave's blond moustache—a very imposing moustache for nineteen, but in fact Dave was almost twenty.

Cyrus caught the flicker also, and I saw the color leap up under his dark skin. In almost any other family there would have been some chaffing. I said to myself that if Rob had come home he might have led Dave into somesuch enormity, for Dave, big as he was, could still be led as Estelle had led him; and Rob was no respecter of persons. But, in truth, we had never found our brother Cyrus a person with whom to jest.

Later we had Leander in with his fiddle—which he always called "she" and regarded with great affection—and Hiram Nute to sing "My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose," and "Wandering Willie," in a clear, high tenor, which cracked a little on the upper notes.

And none of us were merrier than grandma, to whom Dave's coming had been a delightful surprise. Although she leaned upon Cyrus, and his devotion was a beautiful thing to see, and was fond of every one of her grandchildren, yet, as we all knew, it was Dave who was the very pulse of her heart. It was long before we saw her so merry again!

Uncle Horace came to the Thanksgiving next day, and Parson Grover, who was a widower now, and had Marilla Gooch to keep house for him—and she was suspected byLoveday of frying his beefsteak and not properly airing his sheets. Then there were Great-Uncle Silas, grandmother's brother, and his wife, old and childless, and Cousin Sarah Saunders and her seven children from the Port.

Grandma sat with Cyrus on one side of her and Dave on the other, and a pink flush like the rose of youth burned in her soft, seamy cheeks.

Uncle Horace, at the foot of the table, had the minister on one side of him and on the other Dr. Yorke, Alice's father, a snowy-haired little man whose black eyes were as keen as his daughter's were bright.

Parson Grover said a lengthy grace; it was a habit of his and one not to be foregone at Thanksgiving, of course. It was the grace after meat that grandfather always preferred—because it was easier to get the children into a subdued and devotional mood after a meal than before. Parson Grover alluded to each one of us almost by name. He returnedthanks for our joy in the unexpected return of the noble youth who had shown by his coming that his most highly prized pleasures were found by the home hearthstone "and in the affections of his family."

I peeped—I may as well confess it. Dave did always so dislike to be brought into notice in that way, and he had now become accustomed to less primitive manners than those of Palmyra and unused to dear Parson Grover's fatherly familiarity.

I had expected that he would look disturbed but I was not prepared for the white misery in his face. He sprang to his feet almost before Parson Grover had said Amen.

“I can’t listen to that—that about me, you know,” he said, and it was evident that there was a boyish lump in his throat, although he held his voice so firm.

“I ought to have told before why I came home, but I hated to spoil the Thanksgiving. You must not take it too hard, grandma, there are others to do honor to—to grandpa and theold name”—now the young voice shook—“but I—I have been expelled from college.”

A great shock is always more or less benumbing. We stared at him incredulously. There was even a feeble smile upon grandma’s face. She did not seem to understand at all. Since Dave was speaking it must be something pleasant to hear. If anything had happened to Dave at college it must be something that would make us proud. She looked over her glasses inquiringly at the faces around the table, and what she saw there made the faint pink color waver in her cheeks.

“What were you saying, Davy dear? Rob isn’t worse? You didn’t come home to bring ill news? If—if they haven’t treated you well at college——”

Uncle Horace coughed, the hard, dry cough that spoke volumes and was his most characteristic utterance. It was a kind of résumé and reminder of all the dismal prophecies he had ever uttered. There was even a faintsmile flickering about his thin mouth, as if he enjoyed the situation.

I flashed an irate glance at him, but what did he care? He cracked an almond between his long, powerful fingers, and continued to smile in the dead, oppressive silence that followed Dave’s confession. I positively did not dare to look at Cyrus.

“It’s more than you think, grandma. They have sent me away from the college. I can never go back. I wish—I wish I could have kept you from feeling so!”

He said it with a boyish stammering and I recalled the day when Miss Raycroft and the committee had sent him home from the Palmyra school.

Poor Dave! would he always be a boy? I did not yet realize that it must be a serious offense that he had committed, a far more serious one than the drawing of Miss Raycroft on the blackboard in the guise of the old woman who was going to sweep the cobwebs from the sky!

“It was a pity not to think of that before,” said Cyrus in a cold, hard voice.

“I have been a disgrace to you; whatever you choose to say to me is all right,” said Dave, and his own voice was a little hard. “Perhaps it would have been better for me to go away somewhere, far enough for you never to hear of me again. But it seemed to me more the part of a man, and for grandma’s sake, too, for me to face the music. Perhaps there will be something that a fellow of my brawn and muscle can do in the shipyard. At least I am not weak physically.”

By this time grandma had gone to his side, giving great thumps with her cane and making it fly so that I feared for the dishes, and Cyrus got a whack upon his knee. She hung upon Dave’s arm—she was so tiny a body that it seemed as if he might almost put her into his pocket—and she stroked his large hand with her two small ones.

“If they have treated you badly they shall answer for it! The best boy, always, andDeacon Partridge’s grandson! Some evil-minded, envious person has done you harm. Cyrus will see to it! Cyrus will set it right!”—for by this time Cyrus had become the Grand Mogul to grandma.

She stood there, stroking and patting his hand and saying comforting words. It was a little absurd, of course, and a deep flush had swept over Dave’s pale face, but I saw Alice Yorke’s beautiful eyes fill with tears.

“You are mistaken, grandma. The college authorities are quite right, from their point of view. What I did was against the rules.” It looked like a flush of shame that now so deeply dyed Dave’s face—such a boyish face in spite of the moustache!

Grandma’s sweet face blanched under his look. Its childish expression seemed to vanish and the old, serious dignity to come back.

“Was it against—against God’s rules, Davy?” she asked, and although her voicewas firm I could see her small frame tremble as she awaited his answer.

“I—I can’t say, grandma.” He said this hesitatingly and after a moment of dead silence.

Cyrus drew a long hard breath and the gleam of hope faded out of his face; it had been hope and my heart warmed to Cyrus. Nothing could deepen the cynical certainty that had appeared in Uncle Horace’s face, from the first, but he glowered at Dave now in an annihilating way from under his shaggy eyebrows. There was neither consideration nor mercy for Dave to be expected from him. He would not have shown them to his son, for whom it was evident that he had a strong feeling in his own hard way.

“You will know all about it from the President,” Dave continued, with an effort that made his young voice hard and cold like Uncle Horace’s own. “There is no appeal to be made. Nothing can be said that will doany good. I am simply expelled and disgraced.”

“And ruined for life!” broke in Uncle Horace bitterly. He was looking moodily into his plate and he seemed unconscious of the presence of others; in fact, Uncle Horace never cared before whom he spoke his mind.

Cyrus hastily rose and drew grandma’s arm within his own.

“Perhaps it would be better to leave the discussion of this family affair until some more fitting occasion,” he said, with his most chilling dignity. “One can’t help feeling that a little better taste might have been shown in choosing a time for the confession of disgrace.” He added this in a low tone to Dave, but every one whose ears were at all sharp could hear it.

“I rather think you’re right about that,” said Dave, in a voice that he would not soften and which therefore sounded defiant. “I didn’t intend to make a scene, but it seemed to me that what Mr. Grover said of meobliged me to own up. It came out before I thought.”

“A little theatrical scene often arouses sympathy,” Uncle Horace remarked with his cool sneer. And grandma burst into tears, the pitiful, feeble tears of old age.

“Now, Horace, aren’t you ashamed?” quavered Great-Uncle Silas, who was ninety and tender of heart. “Phoebe, don’t you take on so! (to grandma). Boys will be boys. ’Twas peccydilloes, I’ll warrant; nothing but peccydilloes.”

“I never heard anything but good reports of the French children,” said Cousin Sarah Saunders, in a dry tone. “At least, not since they were young ones. It ’peared to me they had done remarkable well considering.”

Cousin Sarah Saunders had had many misfortunes and was not of the kind that sweetens in adversity. She was “real good in sickness, if she did carry her pincushion inside out,” Loveday said.

“My dear, dear friend,” said Parson Grover,with a quaver in his voice. “I think our friend is right in suggesting that we should use gentleness and—and consideration in dealing with the young and not condemn unheard——”

“We have been waiting to hear,” interrupted Uncle Horace, finishing his nuts. No one but he would have interrupted Parson Grover.

“I cannot deny,” said the minister mildly, “that it is a trying misfortune for a family that has always carried itself so honorably and uprightly, but—but the boy seems so frank and manly! May we not hope there are extenuating circumstances?”

Cyrus had taken grandma out of the dining-room and the others were following, Estelle walking proudly, her arm within Dave’s. She was not very tall—we did not think that she had quite gotten her full growth, although she was eighteen—but her fair head was finely set and her hauteur was quite impressive.

The minister’s gentle, placating voice went on as we went out of the room and the strains of “The Girl I Left Behind Me,” on Leander’s fiddle came from the kitchen as a curious accompaniment. For long afterwards I could not hear that air without having the pang of that moment vaguely repeated.

Grandma retired to her own room, and Estelle disappeared with Dave. Uncle Horace, with a sudden change of manner, endeavored to draw the minister and Uncle Silas and Dr. Yorke into a political discussion, in which effort he was seconded by Cyrus, who was not, however, as successful as the older man in feigning to be wholly forgetful of the painful episode and quite at his ease.

Cousin Sarah Saunders rambled on inconsequently, with reminiscences of the disastrous results of second marriages and second families. She addressed herself to Alice Yorke and to whomsoever would listen, and I knew that Cyrus, while he struggled to preservehis dignity, was being stabbed by small thorns. But that knowledge went only a little way toward making me forgive him for being so hard to Dave.

None of the guests stayed long. Cousin Sarah Saunders and her seven were the last to go, and I hastened their departure a little by loading them down with nuts and cake and candy.

As soon as the door closed upon them I hastened to find Dave and Estelle, leaving Uncle Horace and Cyrus to a conference which they evidently did not wish to share with any one.

Dave's door was locked and he would not open it.

"Go away now, Bathsheba, do go away!" came in a hoarse, muffled tone.

When anything went wrong with the aliens they had always wanted to have it out by themselves, while the rest of us, even Cyrus as a boy, shared our woes. I found Estelle prone upon her bed. The face sheturned to me was flushed and miserable, but not tear-stained.

"Did he tell you?" she cried. "Such dreadful things! Going to races and borrowing money to pay his bets! Those are the things that they accuse him of. And he won't deny them!"

I dropped upon a chair and could not speak for trembling.

"There's some reason why he won't deny them!" said Estelle in a shrill, excited voice, that one would hardly have recognized as hers.

"He was always that way. He always owned up. Some small boys would have said they didn't mean the old woman with the broom for Miss Raycroft," I said, sharply referring to the earlier trouble at school.

"You don't mean that you believe he did those dreadful things?" cried Estelle, springing to her feet.

"He—he was always so easily led," I stammered. "He would never mean to do wrong,but—but so few people do mean to do wrong!"

I felt that my conclusion was both lame and irritating; but had we not always felt and known that Dave had not a strong character, that what he would become must depend largely upon the influences that surrounded him? Who should know this better, I thought, than the little sister who had kept him—generally in a salutary way—under her thumb?

"He's a dear boy," I added feebly, while Estelle's indignation held her speechless, "but too easily led."

"If you believe those things of Dave you are no sister of mine!" cried Estelle. She drew herself up to her full height and hurled her words at me as if they were so many javelins.

I felt unaccountably abashed before her, considering that she was my younger half-sister, over whom I had exercised a motherly care and always snubbed in an elderly fashionwhen I thought proper. And yet I was not so subdued as to be willing to part with my reason and common sense for the sake of retaining Estelle's sisterly regard. So I felt it to be the wisest course to retreat as speedily as possible from her room.

But it was such a wretched and angry young face upon which I closed the door that I could not refrain from opening it again to say:

“We don’t know yet, Estelle. He may not be to blame! Wait until we know.”
“I know now, because I know Dave!” the angry young voice called after me.

CHAPTER V
A LADY-LIKE RECREATION

"IT is one thing to be ashamed and another to be really repentant," said Cyrus, judicially. "It is almost as if he lacked responsibility and moral sense. So far as I know he hasn't expressed the least penitence for what he has done."

"It is very hard for some boys to say in so many words that they are sorry; you know that yourself, Cyrus," I said, with my usual lack of tact—for Cyrus had never been one to "own up" or show his penitence openly, when caught in a boyish prank. But one could say this for Cyrus, he was never guilty of many boyish pranks. "Dave always owned up, but, perhaps, he did take things rather lightly; it's some people's nature," I added, lamely.

No one ever put me at such a disadvantage as my own brother Cyrus.

"It's an unfortunate nature—to be able to do serious wrong and take it lightly," said Cyrus. Which was an undeniable proposition. Estelle's answer to such was the persistent denial that Dave was ever guilty of the wrong-doing with which he was charged. There was some dreadful mistake, Estelle repeated, and I will admit, that in the face of the very strong proofs, this seemed to me provokingly childish.

The letter from the President of the college to Uncle Horace, Dave's guardian, had been a dreadful arraignment. Dave had not only gone off to the horse-races at Newmarket, twenty miles away from the college, but he had pretended to be absent because he was caring for his cousin who was ill at his boarding-place not far from the college. The boy had been very ill and Dave had neglected him and left him to the care of strangers, not even causing word to be sent home until his return from the races.

He had borrowed money to pay his debts, having first forged a check upon his uncle, and, becoming alarmed, secured its return by the payment of cash before it was presented for payment.

All this had come to the knowledge of the college authorities through another student, who had also been expelled from college for going to the races. He was a rich young New Yorker and from him Dave had borrowed money. In youthful rage and in defiance of all principles of college honor, he had denounced the "whited sepulchres" among the students, as bad as he and worse, except for the sin of being found out. For Dave had pretended to be nursing his cousin while he had in reality run away to the races leaving him to strangers. And while there he had forged a check to pay his lost debts, only repenting and borrowing money, instead, when a realizing sense of the consequences seized him.

For one of us this really seemed too bad to be true. That was one of the arguments inDave's favor with which I had tried Cyrus' patience.

"He isn't exactly one of us, you know," Cy had answered. "I always thought it likely that the alien blood would show itself. And I was afraid of the liking that he had

for horses even as a youngster. I never approved of his breaking-in of Uncle Horace's colts bare-back."

"He thought no more of the horses than Rob did," I retorted. "For my part I like to see a boy fond of animals. It means healthy human nature and a kind heart."

Cyrus shook his head doubtfully. "There are different ways of being fond of animals," he said. "I always knew that Dave's way was, more than Rob's, the way of the sport-loving man. He had the pedigrees of all Uncle Horace's horses at his tongue's end, before he knew the multiplication table, while Rob never thought of such a thing. I used to be afraid that he would get a fancy for horse-racing. I have said to Uncle Horace,more than once, that the raising of blooded stock wasn't an altogether safe business where there were boys."

"I don't see how you could think of such a thing," I cried, indignantly. "I never did. There never was anything vulgar such as betting about our boys." And then I remembered what Dave had done and hung my head.

"Uncle Horace used to like Dave's way with the horses better than Rob's," I continued. "He said Rob had a sickly sentimentality about animals. You know he sold old Lucifer because Rob was so fond of him. I thought that was cruel."

"I should prefer sentimentality to the racing instinct," said Cyrus. "A boyish weakness that leans to the side of goodness is a very different thing from a lack of moral sense that leads to real wickedness."

"You never did like Dave," I cried, reproachfully. "When he and Rob got intoboyish mischief you always laid all the blame upon Dave."

"Was I not usually right?" asked Cyrus, quietly. "Rob has his faults, but he is one of ourselves, we know what to expect of him."

"You talk as if Dave had not a drop of Partridge-blood in his veins!" I said, indignantly.

"I'm afraid he takes after the other side," answered Cyrus, with a resigned air.

Cyrus never grew excited or impatient over the other children, now. He seemed to have adjusted the chains to his wrists. He walked out of the room as if to end the conversation. We were in his own den, a room he had fitted up in the great attic which had been open and unfinished before, and he seemed to prefer to leave it to me rather than to continue an argument. But after he had closed the door he opened it again to say, in his well-balanced tone, that always provoked me:

"I have rather more hopes of the girl."

The girl! He always would take that tone of aloofness towards Dave and Estelle, and that while he was sacrificing himself for their welfare!

"Estelle believes in Dave," I called after him, softly. "She thinks there is some mystery about it."

"That is mere childishness," said Cy, loftily.

At first I doubted whether Dave would adhere to his determination to go into the shipyard to work as a common laborer, and, if he did, whether Uncle Horace and

Cy would allow it. But Uncle Horace grimly approved. Dave had the brawn and muscle for a ship's carpenter, he said, and he could serve his apprenticeship like any other young man. And Cyrus agreed, although I thought he would have been better pleased if Dave had essayed his penance—or begun his life-work—as one was pleased to regard it—at a distance from Palmyra.

There was a ship at the time on the stocks whose inside work was to be done, althoughthe weather was becoming wintry, and Dave went to his apprenticeship at once and looked, in blue overalls, a colored shirt and rough jacket, just as much like a Greek god as ever. Estelle made salves and cold cream for his hands—Dave always had very white and delicate hands—and said very little. The color that had been fitful was always bright in her cheeks, now, and she held her head high. I think she still believed, not in Dave's penitence, as we were all—unless it were Uncle Horace—trying to do, but in Dave's innocence, and had not given up the hope of proving it in spite of Dave's persistent reticence—as persistent to her as to the rest of us; indeed, more so, for it was easy to see that he avoided her.

But he must have admitted to her that he was anxious about the money he had borrowed, for she began to show a feverish eagerness to earn money. Uncle Horace and Cyrus had proposed to pay Dave's debt, for the sake of the family honor, but Davestoutly claimed the right to shoulder it himself.

He could discharge it in time, he declared. The young man to whom it was due, repenting perhaps of his dishonorable betrayal of Dave to the college authorities, had agreed to wait for a certain length of time. And now the debt was galling Estelle more than it galled Dave. Even Estelle, who believed in him, could not doubt that Dave was not given to worry.

She had begun to draw again, having changed her mind about the value of art since she had sacrificed her Mother Goose drawings through fear that drawing would lead to "worser" things, such as smoking and like evils.

She had taken drawing lessons at the Academy, of Herr Barmfeld, who came once a week from the little city near by on the river, which was growing like a mushroom, and sending little sympathetic thrills of new life into stolid, steady-going, old Palmyra.

The lessons had disturbed her very much at first. There was so much to undo and unlearn of her own work and ways that she was bewildered. She confided in Octavia and me at last. I suspected that she had been drawing and drawing and never letting us know it, but Octavia was altogether surprised.

Octavia was still teaching, varying the monotonous routine by furtive little ambitions in the way of story-writing. The stories came back to her with curt notes, or kind notes, or no notes at all, from the editors who received them. The only unvarying part of the performance was that they came back. I had grown to hate the sight of the packages in our box at the post-office. I always espied them through the window before I went in, and they gave me a dreadful pang, for Octavia's sensitive face

changed so when she received them and I laid to them the cruel little crow's feet that were pinching the corners of her eyes.

We had all been seized with the desire tohelp on the family fortunes, for with all the new activities that the little growing city neighbor had aroused in Palmyra, shipbuilding did not flourish as in the olden times. Some people doubted whether it ever would flourish in our State again.

It seemed to me, sometimes, that Cyrus was wasting his life in a dreary round of unproductive drudgery. And Octavia, who had remarked to me, wistfully, long before we sent Dave to college, that nowadays, women—bright women—could do so many things, poor Octavia's stories had all been returned to her. Her courage had always mounted again after defeat, and a long story was now growing slowly, and laboriously, under her pen. I, alone, was in her confidence and knew that "Evelyn Marchmont" was expected to make the family fortunes.

When Estelle also confided in me and showed me her portfolio full of drawings, I straightway marched her into Octavia's room with it. I was still the domestic one; sagecheese and home-made preserves were the weapons with which I defied fate and I knew that I was not a judge of drawings.

Octavia was, perhaps, not much more so, but it seemed to me appropriate that the author of "Evelyn Marchmont" should criticise them rather than the maker of sage cheese. For myself I found them different from the drawings of other Academy girls, vaguely different from anything I had ever seen. The people were more like real people, and all the scenes were homely ones. I felt that the people ought, maybe, to look more picturesque than ordinary, and certainly have more conventional settings. I was afraid they were pretty bad. And how to save my conscience and Estelle's feelings at the same time was a perplexing problem. I solved it like a coward by saying nothing and drawing her, portfolio and all, into Octavia's room.

It was Saturday, a school holiday, and Octavia was at work on "Evelyn," which shethrust hastily out of sight. She looked dubiously at the drawings. I could see that she felt my misgivings, and more. She said they were very pretty, and that was a wonderful likeness of Deacon Snow when he fell asleep in the long prayer, and of Hiram Nute with his fiddle. But she was afraid that such work would never amount to much and she hoped that Estelle had not neglected her studies for it.

The color flamed over Estelle's high, blue-veined forehead—it had burned hotly enough in her cheeks before—and I caught a little contemptuous quiver of her mobile lips. They seemed never likely to understand each other, those two! Octavia's ideas and sympathies broadened slowly, slowly even with the discipline of teaching children, and of writing stories that were returned to her! And Estelle had, no doubt—how should it be otherwise—something of the "bumptiousness" of youth.

She got out of Octavia's room ratherquickly and I followed her. At the threshold of her own door she turned upon me, her bosom heaving in the old childish way and her eyes shining moistly.

“You don’t think anything of them, either of you!” she burst forth. “And I hoped to earn some money by them. I must earn some money! I can’t have Dave owe that dreadful boy who told of him—told lies of him, too!”

“He borrowed the money for something,” I said, stubbornly—disagreeably—I am afraid; “and, Estelle, you are only eighteen. You can’t hope to earn much yet. After you are graduated, perhaps you may get the Mile End school that Octavia used to teach”—for Octavia now had a kindergarten of her own—“or help her in her school.”

“No,” said Estelle, slowly, “I shall never help Octavia in her school. It isn’t that I don’t like the little children—although I would rather draw them than teach them—but I couldn’t get along with Octavia.She never liked me. If I were to help you——”

But I shook my head hastily. Estelle had no talent for cheese or preserves. I shuddered to think of the time when she put sweet marjoram into the cheese instead of sage! And Leander complained that all her turkeys and chickens died in debt, she and Dave would overfeed them so, being so tender-hearted that they were always afraid that something might go unfed. The hens were so fat that they couldn’t lay—and the number of superfluous roosters that belonged to her brood and that she wouldn’t have killed would have destroyed her profits if there had otherwise been any. No! clearly Estelle’s farming methods would never be money-making.

“You don’t think I can do anything!” she cried; and although it was half-jokingly I knew that the tears in her eyes were hot. “You will see! You will see!” and her eyes flashed through the tears.

Now by this time I was twenty-four and felt very old and wise, and although I had not been far from Palmyra in my life, yet that sort of association with the world which demands of it its money for the products of one’s hand and brains is a developing experience. If any one scoffingly refuses to regard sage cheese and preserves, that command the very best market, as brain products, why let them try to make them.

“I think you don’t quite know yet what it is to do things for money,” I said. And then my heart was suddenly wrung with pity for the poor young thing who was putting her whole heart and soul into work in which no one else would ever see what she saw, which the world would never regard as worth its consideration—much less its money! I could understand that it would be far worse to fail in this way than in cheese and preserves.

I had my own misgivings about “Evelyn Marchmont,” but it did not seem so pitifuland futile an undertaking as Estelle’s pictures. Some time I thought she would find out that our Octavia was worth listening to.

“I—we didn’t say that they were bad,” I stammered. “Only they don’t look quite like the other girls’ drawings and I don’t want you to think that you can get money for them and be disappointed. Money is the hardest thing in the world to get, you know.”

“I’ve got to have it for Dave,” she said, simply, and she hugged her portfolio of drawings as if therein lay all her hopes.

“I’ve been thinking, Estelle; there is my money in the bank,” I stammered. For even in the stress of hard times I had been able to save a little; my jellies, especially the quince, would always bring their price.

I had hesitated about offering it to pay such debts as Dave had incurred. I inherited the true New England thrift, along with the Partridge nose; moreover it seemed to me better for him to shoulder the burden himself. He had brought quite enough troubleupon others. But before Estelle’s troubled face I weakened.

“I will let Dave have that,” I said.

“He wouldn’t take it! I wouldn’t let him!” she said, almost defiantly; and then her mood softened suddenly. “Dear old Bashie! I know how good it is of you!” she said. “And you must think I’m horribly full of vanity if I can’t bear to be told that my drawings are not good. But it isn’t vanity—scarcely at all vanity. That is,” she added, “of course it hurts. I think it must be like having one’s own children ill-treated. But it is chiefly because I want to be independent, and just now I must help Dave. No, no, Bathsheba, we couldn’t take your money; that would be worse than the shipyard!” The little shiver of repugnance that shook her slender frame made me realize, as I had not done before, how keenly she felt Dave’s disgrace and hardships.

She looked at me meditatively for a moment. I understood afterward, that she hadbeen weighing my critical capacities and, perhaps, trying to have a little faith in them.

“Come with me, Bathsheba,” she said, at length. And I followed her, wondering, up the attic stairs. It was cold; so cold that our breath went before us in little whiffs like smoke. Cyrus almost always had a fire in a little cylinder stove in his den, but the rest of the great attic was filled with the winter’s bitter cold, as with a tangible presence.

In one corner was a screen made of a clothes-horse hung with an old, moth-eaten shawl that our great-aunt, Abby Tewksbury, who was a missionary, had brought from India. It seemed that they had not realized, in Palmyra, the value of an India shawl, for moth and mildew had marked it for their own, and yet the dull, rich colors still showed in the sunlight that flooded the great room. Behind the screen I saw with surprise that Estelle had fitted up a rough little studio for herself and on a clumsy easel was a painting, nearly finished.

It was a landscape, a bit of river—it might be our river—with an old mud-scow and a group of children on the bank. In the background was a mountain, misty about its top; it might be old “Blue.” It was really a picture; it looked to me as if Herr Barmfeld himself might have painted it, and my heart thrilled.

“It’s really a river!” I cried. “And such a pretty blue, and the trees are so lovely on the bank! But instead of the mud-scow and the children I think I would have had a

pretty boat and a lady with a parasol. Nothing looks so pretty on the water as a lady with a parasol! Then, I think you might really sell it."

"I am afraid it is very hard to sell such pictures, for any but artists of the first rank," she said. "But I am going to try," she added, hopefully. "I must try."

"The screen that Maria Oakes painted for the Village Improvement Society's Fair brought five dollars," I said, encouragingly.

Was there again a little contemptuous quiver of the finely-chiseled lips?

"I know I'm not a judge, Estelle," I said, humbly. "I've had my mind so upon cheese and preserves. I'm only critical because I so much want you to succeed."

She gave me one of her rare caresses—rare even when she was a child.

"I'm hateful about my work because I'm so anxious," she said. "I only wish I had had a talent for cheese and preserves!"

"If you will take my money, just to tide you over this trouble," I hazarded again. "You will be sure to pay it. Nothing is denied to patient and well-directed effort," I quoted tritely from the copy-book.

"Not when it's for Dave—and you don't believe in him!" she said, firmly.

What would I not have given to be able to say that I did believe in Dave!

"I think it was noble of him to come home and work in the shipyard," I said, a trifle haltingly, for in my heart was a lurkingdoubt whether it would not have been nobler in Dave to go away and carve out his future independently—although I surely did not wish that he had done that, for I feared the world for Dave.

Estelle promptly and decisively turned her back upon me. She had evidently determined that she would not talk with any of us about Dave.

"I wish it were not so cold here; there is no other place in the house where I can get a good light in the late afternoons, the only time I have," she said. I heard Cyrus come out of his den and I called to him. She made a little startled objection, but thought better of it and even drew the shade higher to throw a better light on the picture for Cyrus' near-sighted eyes.

"Why, it is really pretty, very pretty!" said Cyrus, indulgently. "I like to see you girls have lady-like recreations." He glanced a little ruefully at my roughened hands. "The cheese and the preserves are not exactlyrecreations, Bathsheba, but they are womanly work. One of these days I hope the old, prosperous times will come back to the shipyard, and then you shall none of you do anything but make pictures—or 'sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam.'"

Cyrus was in an amiable, light-minded mood as I had not seen him before since Dave's return.

"But I am going to make pictures to earn money," said Estelle, with a tilt of her yellow head.

Cyrus smiled carelessly, cast a backward glance at the picture as he turned away and said lightly:

“I’m afraid you’ll find the road to fame a long one, little sister. And they say that in art money only comes with fame.”

“He needn’t call me little sister when he—he’s so hard on Dave!” cried Estelle, angrily. “Letting him work in the shipyard, like a common laborer, and—and thinking my work is play!”

Cyrus’ returning step was heard upon the stairs.

“Estelle, I’ve been thinking that one of the carpenters at the yard might put up a partition—make a room for you there. It could take in the chimney so that you could have a stove. I should think there was a fine light there for a studio.”

“I should like it if you thought it would be worth the while,” said Estelle, and her face lighted.

“Why, of course. I’ll send Bilkins up at once,” said Cyrus, genially.

“That’s very kind of Cyrus,” Estelle remarked, with an air of candor, as we heard him go down the stairs. “But I would rather he would be fair to Dave than kind to me.”

“Have you heard that Rob has come home?” I asked, with a sudden recollection of the news that Leander had brought from the other side of the river. “He is too ill to finish his course at the Preparatory School. It will be a great blow to Uncle Horace.”

Estelle started and her face flushed.

“I’m going over this moment to see Rob!” she said. “I’ve always felt that he knew something about the mystery—if he would only tell!”

I looked after her with wondering pity for her delusion. What mystery could there be except that Dave had been bad enough to leave Rob alone and ill among strangers to go to the races?

CHAPTER VI
LOVEDAY GROWS MYSTERIOUS

ESTELLE was gone so long that I thought she must have stayed to the one o'clock dinner; twelve or one o'clock dinners were universal in Palmyra. But before we reached our apple dumpling dessert she came in, with a glow that was more than that caused by the frosty air.

Dave didn't come home to dinner. The distance from the shipyard was too short to be any hindrance, and Cyrus always came, as a matter of course, but Dave said that a workman could not make his toilet in the middle of the day. He said it without the least bitterness; from first to last there never was any bitterness about Dave. Sometimes I thought Cyrus would have a higher opinion of him if he would take his punishment—orhis penance—less cheerfully. I suppose we should not have liked Dave to sit at the table in his workman's clothes, not because he was a workman, but because he was Dave. I always thought, while I ate, of Dave with the cold luncheon which he carried. Cyrus had arranged a way for the workmen to heat their coffee—that was after Estelle insisted upon carrying something hot to Dave. But I think it was Dave himself who stopped her. While he was far from posing as a martyr he was determined to do the real thing, as a workman should.

"No, I didn't stay to dinner," Estelle said in answer to Octavia's question. "There was turnip in the soup; it smelled all over the house." Estelle was fastidious to a degree, and so, indeed, was Dave, far more so than the rest of us. "But I had some of Rob's broth, which he wouldn't touch, and a bit of toast. I don't want any dinner."

She spoke absent-mindedly, and she didn't reply to grandma and Octavia who gentlyremonstrated, or to Loveday, who first scolded, and then immediately had a piece of yesterday's plum-pudding warmed for her. Estelle was fond of plum-pudding and Loveday always saved a piece for her, as she had done from the time she was a child.

But when I went to her room, an hour later, the plum-pudding was untouched on the tray where Viola had set it, and Estelle was fiercely setting a patch upon the knee of Dave's blue overalls. Fiercely may be a trifle too strong an adjective, but I know of no other that so well describes the grim energy of her action. I think Dave's unaccustomed work must have been as fiercely done, for both pairs that he wore were already worn out at the knees.

"Estelle, if you had found out anything—anything in Dave's favor from Rob—of course you would tell me," I said.

"I don't know but I should tell you, Bathsheba," she said slowly. "But there is nothing to tell. Rob is very elusive,you know; he is not in the least like his father."

"Certainly Uncle Horace is about as elusive as a sledge hammer," said I.

"But I had my suspicions confirmed. He knows all about it, and he had more to do with it than he will tell," she declared positively.

“I don’t see how he could have had anything to do with it,” I retorted, in my stupidly argumentative way, although I knew argument was useless, even if all argument had not been exhausted on that subject. “He was ill in bed at the time, and if he hadn’t been no one could ever suspect him of having anything to do with horse-races. He never could bear to see horses trained. The only time he and Dave ever quarreled was when Dave broke in the colts. He didn’t send Dave to the races. Rob never was the least bit coarse. I didn’t think Dave was, either——”

“But you lost all faith in him at the firsttrial!” interrupted Estelle, not reproachfully, but in a matter-of-fact tone.

“Did—did Rob say that he thought that there was any excuse for Dave?” I said. How could I say that he thought Dave didn’t do it, when Dave had virtually owned that he did?

Estelle congealed at once. “I didn’t ask him,” she answered and took such a great snip in the overalls that she was forced to cut out a larger patch. But as new light shone in her eyes, there was no doubt about it that her suspicions, whatever they were, had been confirmed.

But I, who did not, as she demanded, believe in Dave, was not accounted worthy to be told what she had discovered. I thought, myself, it was fancy. She admitted that there was nothing to tell and yet the look in her eyes told me that there was something from which she shut me out.

I left her to her patching, and went across the bridge to Uncle Horace’s myself. I hadnot thought of it until grandma said she wished she had known that Estelle was going over, because she wanted to send some calves-foot jelly to Rob. I said, at once, that I would go and carry it.

Rob would be no more elusive to me than to Estelle. I remembered now that she had never been one of his favorites. I had even fancied sometimes that he was a little jealous of her influence over Dave.

“Loveday will take the jelly out of the mould for you,” grandma had said. And I sought for Loveday, knowing that she was so dainty and particular about her jelly that she disliked to have any one touch it. But Loveday was not to be found, and Viola had retired to don the plaid dress that was her afternoon toilet, adorned with cherry ribbons for the beguiling of Leander Green, a persistent bachelor. So I emptied the mould myself, taking care that the jelly rose should not be shorn of a petal, and that it should be as daintily arranged as possible to tempt theinvalid’s appetite. And across the bridge I went, hearing the workmen’s hammers from the shipyard on the way, with my heart sore for Dave, and determined that if I thought from his actions that Rob really knew anything about the matter he should not be elusive with me. I was not one of the clever ones of the family, and I knew it, but I had the persistency that always accompanied the Partridge nose.

I found Rob lying on a lounge in his own room. It was a chintz-covered lounge and against its gay colors his face looked woefully wan and wasted.

“Rob, you ought to have come home before,” I exclaimed, too frank in my dismay at his changed looks. “Palmyra air and home nursing are the things to make you pick up!” I added hastily and as cheerfully as I could.

“I knew he didn’t want me to come—father, you know. He thinks I haven’t any pluck.” There was a deep, anxious line betweenthe boy’s delicately-penciled brows. “Dave, now, ought to have been his son.”

“Dave!” I echoed wonderingly. “He can’t bear Dave!”

“That’s because he doesn’t know him. I do.” Rob had a kind of triumphant air as of a great discoverer. “Whatever fathers and mothers and teachers may think, it takes one fellow to know another. When it comes to pluck, now, Dave is all there. He’s simply great!”

“But pluck isn’t everything,” I said seriously, “that is what you boys call pluck. To be good is always the very hardest and bravest thing.”

I expected that my trite copy-book sentiment would elicit scorn. One had to learn the art of putting things to our boys. But instead of being scornful Rob became reflective.

“Perhaps that’s true. I rather think it is,” he said. “But sometimes it isn’t so easy for a fellow to say what is goodness. And things put you into such a fix that you can’t get out—unlessyou have brains and pluck, like Dave.”

This was somewhat enigmatical; if it signified anything it was that there had been some boyish “scrape” out of which Dave had extricated one or both of them. Rob certainly seemed to have no sense whatever of Dave’s moral lapse.

“Nothing—nothing could possibly place any one in such a position that it would be necessary for such wrong-doing as Dave’s,” I said severely. “Although Dave is my brother, and I am quite as fond of him as if he were my own brother, yet I can’t help saying, Rob, that I think it is very dangerous for you to make a hero of him.”

He started up from the couch, his face flushed and his blue eyes blazing. He looked like the portrait of his beautiful young mother who had died when he was a baby. There was something fine and lofty in his expression; it was almost the look of an accusing angel.

“You—you don’t——” he began and faltered, it was, or I fancied that it was, as Uncle Horace’s heavy steps sounded in the room below.

“Girls are such fools!” he growled, as he fell back upon his pillows. “As much—as much as fifty of you wouldn’t be worth Dave’s little finger!” The footstep had ceased to reach our ears now and his voice arose high-keyed and shrill.

I bent over him, obeying a sudden impulse.

“Rob, if you know that Dave didn’t go to the races and—and lose his money, if there was any strange mistake, of course it would be your duty to tell—you would want to tell to clear Dave at any cost to yourself.”

He started up again and scowled at me angrily.

“What cost could it be to me? I am not much of a fellow to go to races, am I?—a fellow who has no more strength than a girl because every once in a while he is choked to death for days and days and nights andnights, and is a disgrace and a disappointment to his father!”

“Oh, not a disgrace, Rob, not a disgrace!” I interrupted. “I think it would kill Uncle Horace if you were that. I hope you don’t think that illness like yours could ever be a disgrace!”

“Kill him? kill father? I guess it would make him kill me, more likely!” he said, with a queer, grim, little chuckle. “He thinks it’s a disgrace to be weak and girly. It makes a fellow like that, Bathsheba, to be the way I’ve been!” He spoke with sudden earnestness, his voice growing husky. “No one understands all about it but Dave; it’s queer when he’s so strong and plucky himself. Usually a plucky fellow thinks you ought to be so, too. He thinks it’s just as easy! But Dave can put himself in another fellow’s place; and we’ve been together such a lot. He liked to go with me just as well as with the boys that were stronger and different. He said so, anyway.” The boy suddenlyraised himself again and looked up wistfully into my face. “You don’t think he was making believe because he pitied me, do you, Bathsheba? I’ve been thinking of a good many things since I’ve been sick this time.”

He looked so pitiful, his angular figure quite devoid of boyish grace, with narrow, stooping shoulders and sunken chest and his eyes so big and dark with the great hollows around them, that tears suddenly filled my eyes.

“I don’t think Dave ever made believe in his life,” I said heartily. “At least he isn’t deceitful.”

“But you pity me,” he said, looking suspiciously at my tears. “I’ve been thinking it would be better if I should die. That’s the way it would turn out in a story-book, and then everything would be all right.”

“The way what would turn out? What would be all right?” I demanded sharply.

“Why—why—Dave wouldn’t have tobother with me, and father would never be ashamed of me any more.”

Of course I scolded him, calling him weak and foolish, and trying to rouse him to the courage and the trust in God’s Providence that alone could help him. I pitied him so that I almost forgot Dave and that my errand had been to try to find evidence that he was innocent—or at least less guilty than he seemed. I could not feel that I had found anything at all satisfactory in that line. It did seem likely that Rob knew more about the matter than he meant to tell, but it was scarcely possible that it was anything that could clear Dave. When a fellow’s inheritance was such a puny body as his, and an incurable disease, it was better that he should die, persisted Rob. And I knew it was no time for preaching, but I remembered the strong helpful text that was engraved upon the tiles of the Deemster’s mantel:

“God’s Providence is Mine Inheritance.”

And I at once set out for home determined to get Estelle to print it, in beautiful old English script, and paint a flower border and then I would hang it in his room. Rob loved pretty things, like a girl. I knew Estelle would be a little scornful at my idea of helping Rob with a motto, I who was the practical one; but a small thing will sometimes have a strong effect upon a morbid mind.

That was the idea that was uppermost in my mind as I hurried out of the yard, by the long stables, to make a short cut to the river bank and cross on the ice, when I ran into Loveday coming out of the old, unused carriage-house. Now there was nothing astonishing in that, for Marcella, Uncle Horace's housekeeper, was Loveday's second-cousin and they often visited each other, but the astonishing thing was that Loveday should start guiltily at sight of me, flush scarlet over to the crisp black waves of her hair and thrust something that she held in her handhastily under her shawl—Loveday, whose greatest horror was of "under-handedness" and who boasted that she never had had a secret in her life.

I glanced back, involuntarily, at the old carriage-house. I remembered suddenly that Hiram Nute's photograph wagon was stored there for the winter. A traveling photograph gallery had been one of Hiram's "combernations" of the last summer. It had suited his taste admirably.

"There wasn't nowhere that you saw so much human nater, without it was top of a tin-peddler's wagon, as you did a takin' folks' photographs," he said.

Loveday withdrew her objection that it was "kind of flighty," in view of its paying qualities, and Hiram gave it up reluctantly and late, for the winter. I remembered hearing that Uncle Horace had given him the use of the old building as a storage house. I also remembered having seen Hiram running the wagon in there just before Thanksgiving.

It seemed quite natural that Loveday should have gone into it, to see that all was safe, Hiram having gone on one of his essence-peddling tours into another State. But why—why should Loveday look guilty about it? She stammered that she was going in a minute to see Marcella; she hadn't time to be gallivantin' 'round, but seein' there was sickness in the house she expected 'twas folks' duty to come and inquire. It struck me that this was probably the first time in her life that Loveday had prevaricated. The stress of the moment turned her pale and afterwards she looked angry—either at herself or me. She had had some errand to Hiram's photograph wagon and it was a secret one; so much was easy to gather from Loveday's manner. But when even Loveday became mysterious I felt that life was too involved a matter for my simple brains.

I left her with relief, and slid out upon the river; the strong west wind blew me toward the shipyard, and I stopped to see Dave. Ihad not been there since he had gone to work, partly because it was not an attractive place in the winter, partly because I shrank from seeing him at work there.

Dave evidently did not shrink from being seen. When I came near he was swinging himself down from the stocks of the ship whose inside work he was helping to finish. At first I could not discover to whom he was talking, but I saw that he looked like a young Viking with his fine, athletic shape and his blond coloring, even in his blue overalls, that pair had one of Estelle's patches upon the knee, and his rough working jacket.

Alice Yorke and her father had been skating; they were such lovers of the sport that they were not deterred, like the rest of us, by the roughness of the ice which had frozen in little ridges after a thaw. The doctor had broken one of his skates and had stopped at the shipyard to repair it. It was to them that Dave was talking, when I came up, withas graceful and nonchalant an air as if he were in the most correct of evening dress at a reception. He had a hammer in his hand and he unloaded his overalls' pockets of nails and screws to find something with which to mend Dr. Yorke's skate.

If it had been one of the Palmyra girls, with whom he had been acquainted from childhood, I should not have thought it strange; but Alice Yorke had come from the city, and there was about her an air of elegance and high-breeding that seemed to set her worlds apart from a workman in overalls. But she evidently thought no more about that little matter than did Dave, for they were having a most merry and sociable time.

The skate mending took a long time; none of the party seemed in a hurry. Dave's capacious overalls' pockets failed to yield a piece of string that was needed and I went into the little counting-house in search of it. I had seen a shadow across the window that I knewwas Cyrus' tall angular form, and I wondered why he did not come out and join the party. We fancied, although it was an astonishing thing to fancy of Cyrus, that he went wherever he was likely to meet Alice Yorke. He groped near-sightedly for the string in a drawer of his desk. He did not say a word and his lips were tightly compressed.

My feelings were queerly divided. I was conscious that I had been having a pride in Dave's manliness that had made me almost forget his moral failings. I read in Cyrus' dark face that he was both ashamed of Dave and a little jealous of him; we all think we can read the faces of our own, and are often as blind as moles.

No, Cyrus would not come out; he was busy. But I knew that he continued to pace the office floor after I had gone, as he had done before I came.

Alice Yorke and Dave were still keeping up their gay trifling, but Alice turned her head eagerly toward the counting-house dooras it closed upon me, and she looked a little disappointed—at least a little crest-fallen, when she saw that I was alone. Perhaps she was not content, like the Palmyra girls, with one string to her bow, I thought a little bitterly, for I didn't want either of my boys played with, mouse-fashion, by a mischief of a girl.

"Good gracious, you don't think you have to take care of Cyrus, do you?" Octavia had said to me scornfully.

But I still thought that Cyrus might have his weaknesses, like any one else. It seemed to me that when one was enduring a long strain of painful duty and self-sacrifice, it might be just the time when a little consoling sweetness would easily reach his heart.

Dave walked home with me. I had waited for him after Alice and her father had gone skating off over the rough surface of the river. His working hours were soon over in these short winter days.

"There are so few men now, Dave," I saidwonderingly, as I watched the dark shapes that plodded off in the wintry dusk.

"Another cut-down," Dave answered shortly.

"But it never was done before in the winter; grandpa wouldn't have allowed it!" I cried.

"Can't be helped," said Dave concisely. "See here, don't you talk to Cyrus about it, nor to any one so that he'll hear of it, but there's been a heavy loss. That brig that went down in the great storm off Seguin was nearly all owned here. It was about all we had left, any of us. And through some loose screw in the underwriters there won't be a cent of insurance. Haven't you noticed how glum Cyrus has been looking for a few days?"

"I noticed that he was looking glum when I went into the office for the string," I said. And Dave gave me a quick, quizzical glance.

Then, after a moment, he whistled sharply. "W-h-e-w! what dunces girls are!" he said.

But this was a remark that had somewhat lost its force from long use. As I have said before we are a candid family.

"Poor old Cyrus has a lot on his hands," he continued seriously. "I don't think he has much of a head for business, and, if he had, I doubt whether he could keep things from going all wrong as times are now. He ought to have been a minister as he planned."

"Dave, haven't you a head for business? Couldn't you take some of the responsibility?" I said eagerly. In the first moment of dismay I didn't think of the poverty that menanced us but only of the family honor, which seemed to me to be centred in the shipbuilding business.

"If I had a head for business I am hardly in a position, just now, to offer my services as a responsible head of the firm!" said Dave dryly. And he left me to go to his own room, humming a light air that Alice Yorke sang.

The sense of misfortune deepened upon mesuddenly. I heard the wolf at the door and felt as if his gaunt length were slinking up the stairs behind me, as I went to my room.

I sat down upon the edge of my bed with coat and hat still on and my practical mind slipped away from the mystery of Dave's wickedness and from Rob's pitiful condition, and even from the family honor as involved in the shipbuilding business, to

the possibility of adding gilt-edged butter to the already famous sage cheese and preserves from Groundnut Hill Farm.

I fear that my mind is scarcely large enough to contain more than one idea at a time and that fact accounts for my being rather stupid when Loveday came into my room, in the small hours of that night, with a bee in her bonnet—or nightcap, rather, to be exact.

She had a large photograph in her hand; I recognized it at once as the object that she had hastily hidden under her shawl as shecame out of Hiram Nute's photograph wagon. She held her candle between the picture and my sleepy eyes.

"What does it 'pear to you to be?" she demanded.

"A horse," I said drowsily. It was a very poor photograph. It had been taken when Hiram first started out with his new "combernation," and it was blurred and badly finished. Beneath the photograph was printed "Prince Charley, Alf Reeder's Great Racer."

Had Loveday become suddenly insane, that she should arise from her bed in the dead of the night to show me with trembling eagerness, this most uninteresting photograph?

"Does it 'pear to you to be any horse you ever saw?" demanded Loveday breathlessly.

I raised myself upon my elbow and looked at her in blinking bewilderment. I had heard that it was the proper thing to humor insane people.

"I've seen so few race-horses, and I don't notice them much," I stammered. "It—it looks like a very fine horse."

"Oh it does, does it? That's the way it 'pears to you then." Loveday heaved a long sigh. "Now it looks to me like one of them poor old creturs that are patched up and curry-combed and have plenty of oats give 'em, and have the whip cracked over 'em, and another horse set to runnin' by 'em to see if they can't get up a little spurt o' life, with their last breath, just to put money into somebody's pocket. I used to see such things up to the Newmarket mile-ground when I was a girl. But there! I'm an old idiot, awakin' you up like this in the middle of the night. An idee ketched a holt of me, and when an idee ketches a holt of me between midnight and sun-up I can't get rid of it without I tell somebody. I was kind of glad I woke up, too, for the lantern was hung out acrost the river."

I sprang up. The lantern was the signalhung out at Uncle Horace's when Rob was very ill and wanted Dave.

"You waked him? He's gone over?" I gasped.

"La, yes; I watched him clear acrost the river in the moonlight, half an hour ago," said Loveday. "I expect nothin' but what that boy is real sick, but it never took that old horse out of my mind. Beats all what an old idiot I be when an idee ketches a holt of me between midnight and sun-up!"

CHAPTER VII
A LITTLE JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD

DAY was growing faintly visible through the window-pane, before I went to sleep, and then I had a troubled dream, none the less unpleasant, as is the way of dreams, because it was nonsensical. Uncle Horace's new pair of calico colts were harnessed to the Dingo, the great brig that had been lost at sea, and Dave was attempting to drive this unique team over the rough ice of the river—as rough as it had been the day before, when it had broken Dr. Yorke's skate. The Dingo's cargo consisted of pots of dainty butter, stamped with clover and wild roses; a kind of sublimated sage cheese, sure to make the fortunes of Groundnut Hill Farm, and glasses of such jelly as never before were seen, with B. D., for Bathsheba Dill stamped upon everyglass. And I knew, vaguely, that in all the great cities the fences and walls and lamp-posts were covered with placards advertising the products of Groundnut Hill Farm! "Bathsheba Dill's Jelly! Buy no other!" I read and was proud.

Suddenly I became aware that Dave was driving upon thin ice. The colts had changed into Alf Reeder's race-horse, with fire streaming from his nostrils, and no one could stop him, not even Alice Yorke, although she appeared, skating along, and clutched at the reins. The ship, steed and driver, disappeared suddenly in the black waters of the river, and over the place where they had gone down Rob's signal lantern swung weirdly, making a noise like the bell buoy down in the bay.

Now, of course that was only what Loveday calls "a mince-pie dream," but yet it haunted me, and its depressing influence would not be shaken off.

Dave came home in the middle of the forenoon. We had earlier in the morning stoppedDr. Yorke as he drove by, and learned that Rob had had a distressing attack of asthma, but not worse and not more dangerous than he had had many times before. He was growing more and more dependent upon Dave. The doctor said that such suffering as his was very weakening to the nervous system.

I hoped that Dave would get some sleep, but I heard him moving about in his room, and I went in to ask him about the shut-down at the shipyard, and how many men had been affected by it. In the midst of my practical plans for strangling the wolf at our own door, I was still anxious for the business honor of the family, and mindful of grandfather's steadfast determination never to turn off any men in the middle of winter.

Dave was drawing, rapidly, on a great sheet of cardboard. He said, "Come in," absently, and went on with his work. It seemed to be the model of a ship, very roughly drawn.

"Wait a minute, Bathsheba, I'm busy," he said impatiently, in answer to my reproachesthat he was not sleeping and to my flood of questions about Rob and about the shipyard. "There! that's more as the thing ought to be! I tell you it riles a fellow to drive nails into such a clumsy craft as Cyrus has got down there on the stocks! It's no

wonder that there's no money in such shipbuilding as that! Now, can't even you, Bathsheba, see the difference between that thing and this!"

He held the great cardboard up before my eyes, and watched me, wistfully, while I wrinkled up my brows, and stared at it stupidly. It must have conveyed to my mind very little impression of what it was really intended to be, for I remember that it only served to remind me, irresistibly, of Miss Raycroft as the old woman with the broomstick, and I said, hastily, in a tone of reproof:

"O Dave, I wouldn't waste my time in that way! They have architects who know more than you, a thousand times, and you will only annoy Cyrus if you say the models he uses are not right!"

"Annoy Cyrus!" echoed Dave, disdainfully. "What do you suppose Cyrus knows about the models of the ships? He leaves that, as you say, to the architects. He thinks as you do, that they know everything."

A cold chill of discouragement settled upon me. Instead of trying to master the details of the business, as I had of late allowed myself to hope that he would, he was thinking only of drawing again! It was vain to hope that one of the "aliens" would have a practical mind! Butter and cheese must save the day for the house of Partridge, if it were to be saved at all! But I did say, grimly, as I turned away:

"I think it would be better to stick to the hammer than to fritter your time away with that sort of thing."

"The hammer is likely to stick to me, it's a way they have when you once get hold of them," said Dave, lightly. "But shall I have no amusements because wielding the hammer is my work? Because we make famous sagecheese shall there be no tidies with roses and ribbons sprawling over all the furniture?"

The rest of the family didn't appreciate my fancy-work, the boys especially, and Dave thought this a very keen thrust.

"To beautify the home is a very different thing from squandering one's time in perfectly useless drawing," I said loftily. "If you even painted pictures like Estelle. I think she may paint one that will do to hang over the spare room mantel and look prettier there than my bouquet of crystallized grasses."

I felt that it was truly noble of me to say this, for I had been much hurt by the lack of appreciation shown my crystallized grasses, dyed every color of the rainbow, and then dipped in alum.

Dave groaned and threw a sofa pillow at me; but I walked out with dignity—and my heavy heart. I felt that it was useless to question Dave further about the state of things at the shipyard. He understood too little about the business, and had too littleinterest in it for his opinion to be of any value.

Butter and cheese and preserves must save the day! "Get you a combernation," Hiram Nute was always saying, "but don't get anything but what folks really want." I was thankful that I had not been led away by any frivolities of art. I had my own high

opinion of the artistic excellence of my tidies and my crystallized grasses, but I had no idea that they would sell. Clearly, I was more sensible than the others.

Ah, me! frankness is painful, for who is there who can frankly write out the past and not write himself down a fool?

It was Saturday, a school holiday, and Octavia was in her room hard at work, I knew, on "Evelyn Marchmont." Now on that day I had but little faith in "Evelyn Marchmont." I felt that it would be a very great thing if Octavia could write a book. No one in Palmyra had ever written a book! When the Centennial exercises of the churchwere printed in book form and the poem that Emmeline Luce had written for the occasion appeared in large type and with her name in full, we felt that all Palmyra was honored by having a poet in its midst, and we looked curiously at Emmeline to see how she bore her garland of fame. Before it had withered, I knew that many original poems were sent from Palmyra to the local papers, and even to more ambitious publications. But it is probable that they all shared the fate of Octavia's stories; they all came back like fledglings to the nest; for none of them ever appeared in print, and Palmyra had never given another poet to the world. Emmeline married and went West to live, and when her husband died, a few years after her marriage, we heard of her as taking boarders to support herself.

But although Fame's little day was over for Emmeline, and there had been no evident results of it in Palmyra, yet I was sure that Octavia's literary efforts dated from that time. She was more persevering than the otheraspirants for literary success had been; whether this argued greater literary talent or not, I could not judge, "Evelyn Marchmont" was the "fine, consummate flower" of effort, whether it might be that of genius or not.

But on that day I could not think hopefully of "Evelyn Marchmont." Emmeline's boarders lay heavily on my mind. Practical necessities do so sadly change one's sense of values in this world. And I felt myself to be the only one in the family who had a really practical mind. Butter and board! those were things that people really wanted, I reasoned, a la Hiram Nute.

So when Octavia called me I went reluctantly to the reading of "Evelyn Marchmont." Octavia did not think me a competent critic; one's limitations seldom fail to be recognized by one's brothers and sisters; but she had a longing for sympathy, and wished some practical ideas on the subject as well.

"Perhaps you represent the average reading public, Bathsheba dear," she said, candidly."Not over-cultivated, you don't mind my saying that, do you? when you have such a beautiful domesticity and are so capable and helpful."

But I did wince. I had a feeling that the writers of books and painters of pictures thought scornfully of my "beautiful domesticity." And who wishes to be called not over-cultivated in these days? So I was not in the best of humors for the reading of Octavia's novel, and yet I became enthusiastic before she reached the end. It seemed to me very clever and interesting, and, moreover, the scene was laid in very

fashionable society. I couldn't understand how Octavia could know so much about it, and her knowledge filled me with admiration.

Octavia had been to Gobang once for a visit, in the winter, and Gobang was the gay and fashionable city of our county; and she had been to Bar Harbor—and every one knows how fashionable that is—with Uncle Horace and Rob. But they stayed only afew days, for the air did not agree with Rob, as it had been hoped that it would.

Now, when a girl has made only such little journeys as these from Palmyra into the world, one does not really expect her to write a society story, but that was what Octavia had done, and as I listened I felt like pinching myself to be sure that I was Bathsheba Dill of Groundnut Hill Farm, with a sister who taught a kindergarten! It occurred to me that if the little old woman on the king's highway had had a sister of whom she was forced to cry,

"O lank a mercy on me!

This surely can't be she,"

it would have greatly complicated the puzzle to her. Yet, perhaps, there comes to most of us a time when some unexpected development in our nearest and dearest makes us doubt whether we have ever really understood them.

The love story was only a thread that ran through the book, but I thought it wasbeautiful. And that, too, was a wonder to me, for Octavia had never been a girl to have lovers—unless one counted Joel Farnham, who used to sing tenor to her alto in the church choir, but who had gone out West to practice law with his brother, and so far as I knew had never written to her.

"How—how did you know how?" I stammered, with tears in my eyes, and all my heart's delight in my face. I knew it was there, because I saw it reflected in Octavia's, and it made her almost pretty. Octavia was plain; she had the Partridge nose—that was like Lady Macbeth's spot that would not out, in our family, and she had a sallow face, dark and thin, and with blue eyes that did not seem to belong to her. But at that moment, with the flush of delight on her face, Octavia was almost pretty. And it pleased me that she should really care for my appreciation, although she had called me the average public, and said I wasn't cultivated.

"Bathsheba, do you really think that people will read it?" she asked, with a little catch in her voice.

"Read it! I should think so!" I cried. "Why, it's better than almost anything in the Palmyra public library!"

"Oh—oh, Bathsheba! think of Thackeray and George Eliot!" Octavia responded deprecatingly. But still I could see that my extreme praise was not disagreeable to her.

And at that moment my practical mind seemed to suddenly turn visionary, and I beheld Octavia's name at the very top of Fame's deathless roll, and I counted it all joy to make butter and cheese and preserves to support her glorious career.

“Then, Bathsheba, if people will read the book it will sell!” said Octavia, firmly. And I gasped for breath. Of course it would sell! Octavia would be rich. My domestic efforts would be unnecessary, so far as she was concerned. A great author would have no need of the proceeds of the homely products ofGroundnut Hill Farm. I am glad to be able to say for myself that in that moment I was too full of joy and pride to have any abashed or shut-out feeling. To be the sister of a great author would be quite enough for me!

“Bathsheba, in the April vacation I am going to Boston to find a publisher!” said Octavia, with resolution.

“I have been thinking,” said I, “that it might be worth the while for me to go. I am sure that I could make better arrangements for the June butter than I can make by letter.”

It seemed an incongruous association—the butter and the book—but Octavia was glad to have me go with her, and she said heartily that she should think I could make almost any arrangement for the butter, I had made Groundnut Hill Farm so famous. At least the prospective famous author was not ashamed of the butter, and that was a comfort.

“Then we can say, without making any explanations, that I am going to the citywith you,” said Octavia, “and until it is accepted, no one need know anything about ‘Evelyn Marchmont.’”

Octavia had grown more sensitive with each one of those returned stories. No one was in her confidence now but me.

“The surprise will make its success all the pleasanter for them—if it does succeed,” continued Octavia, excusing herself; for we are a family who confide in each other.

“Isn’t even Estelle to know?” I inquired, a little wistfully, for it seemed to me that there might be a sympathy between the two devotees of art.

“Oh, the child wouldn’t understand,” Octavia replied, rather impatiently. “It’s of no use to try to pretend, Bathsheba, that she and Dave are quite like ourselves.”

Aliens! It was a long time since Octavia had used the word, but it was easy to see that she still had the feeling that it expressed. I think Octavia was the one of us who had felt Dave’s disgrace the most keenly.

“I think we’d better not say anything about going until just before we start,” continued Octavia, anxiously. “I dread questions.” It was evident that Octavia had grown almost morbidly sensitive, now that the “cold fit” that comes to writers when the work is done, was upon her.

But it happened that when the vacation week came, Estelle was away before us. Alice Yorke had invited her to visit with her, a married sister living in a town not far from Boston. And the others seemed strangely little impressed with the momentous fact that we were going to the city. Cyrus was too much occupied with the depressing condition of business affairs to notice what girls were doing. Cyrus had old-fashioned

ideas, and girls' employments were chiefly "recreations" to his mind. When I explained that I was going to try to make better arrangements for the dairy products and the preserves, and that Octavia was going with me, he said, absently, that it would be"a nice little trip for us." And then his brow darkened with care. Cyrus would have liked to make life all nice little trips for his womankind. He felt—without thinking much about the matter—that they were made to have womanly pursuits, and to take life lightly.

But the discharged men had not been taken on again at the shipyard; the outlook was doubtful, and I knew that Cyrus doubted himself, and was tempted to doubt God's providence.

When we have made sacrifices for what we feel to be the right, we are apt to look to Providence for immediate results in lines of our own choosing. I thought that "God's providence is mine inheritance" might be a good motto to hang up in the shipyard counting-room just now. But one could not tell how Cyrus would take such an attention.

Dave drew a long, long breath when I told him that we were going.

"I'm glad that you're going to have a littleglimpse of the world," he said. And I realized, for the first time, how the grinding, uncongenial work at the yard was telling upon him. There was such a longing in his voice! He had grown thin, and there was a sharp little pucker between his finely-penciled brows. But he had sat up a good many nights with Rob, which was an additional strain to that of the unaccustomed labor.

"The way of the transgressor is hard," said Octavia, when I expressed my pity for Dave; but I saw that her eyes as they followed him were full of tears.

We set off hopefully, even after that, for we were young, and I had already tasted the intoxicating joy of success, especially with my quince jelly. And I meditated a new departure, as the train bore us swiftly along the border of our beautiful river already growing green and perfumed with spring. It was almost sacrilege to think of it, with Octavia beside me, her face flushed and her eyes dreamy with the consciousness of "EvelynMarchmont" in her bag. For it was sausages that I meant to add to the gilt-edged and paying products of Groundnut Hill Farm!

"Evelyn Marchmont" would not win glory and gold at once; I knew that with all my Palmyran ignorance. And I was quite sure, although I dared not ask—Estelle was so fierce in her sisterly faith—that Dave's dreadful debt had not yet been paid. Some one must be practical. So all along, in the sweet April weather, with the authoress palpitating with her high hopes and dreams beside me, I reckoned the probable profits of Groundnut Hill Farm sausages, so many pounds per year!

As we alighted from the train, in the great, roaring, bustling Boston station, two young girls coming out of the car in front caught my eye. The well-poised head, with waving, yellow locks, was surely familiar. And had any one but Miss Jobyns of Palmyra trimmed that sailor hat? Beside the yellow head andfamiliar sailor hat was—

yes, surely it was Alice Yorke's satiny black braids. The two girls disappeared in the throng before I could reach them.

"Oh, no, it couldn't be they," said Octavia, easily. "Wrenton is more than thirty miles from Boston, and Estelle didn't say anything about coming here."

Now, Octavia is near-sighted, but I am not, and her hopes for "Evelyn Marchmont" were evidently more absorbing than my humbler ones. She gave herself no further concern about the yellow head and the black one, while I followed with my eyes through the crowd every girl who bore the least resemblance to those two, and could not rid myself of the impression that Estelle was in the city, nor of the wonder why she had come.

I thought I had seen a portfolio under yellow-head's arm, but I did not mention that to Octavia. I scarcely knew why I did not, for it might have gone far toward inducing herto share my opinion that the young woman was our sister, Estelle. I suppose I hesitated to share with her my vague suspicion that Estelle had come to the city to sell her pictures. It was a pitifully hopeless undertaking, I was sure, and yet I shrunk from hearing Octavia's frankly-expressed scorn. Octavia thought that my crystallized grasses were a more desirable ornament for the guest chamber mantel than any picture that Estelle could paint.

We went to a boarding-house where Parson Grover stayed when he came to the city in Anniversary week. It would be quite safe and proper for us, he said, and in any case we had too little money to think of hotels.

We arrived late in the afternoon, and Octavia proposed that we should spend the whole of the next day in taking a survey of the battle-field, so to speak, and in composing our minds. Now, for my part, I felt all fit for the fray, but I recognized the fact that Octavia had a right to greater sensitivenessabout the child of her brain than I had about my domestic commodities, although I will say that in my opinion there are other children of one's brain than works of literature or art.

But, of course, it is natural that I should wish to think so, and all that is neither here nor there. What concerns this story is the fact that we prowled about the city all the next day, finding out all that we could about the different publishing houses, and trying to decide which one was the worthiest to introduce "Evelyn Marchmont" to the world, and the most likely to do it successfully. As Octavia said, it was just as well to begin in that way, and then if we were finally forced to let any publisher take it who would, why, then, we could make up our minds to that.

She was not interested in the fine grocery stores and markets, or even in The Delicatessen Shop, where I purposed to offer my wares, but she was very patient.

She said, very often, that we might have totry and try. Did I remember how the Bronte sisters had tried and tried? She had been reminded of them ever since we started. I could not remember that the Bronte sisters had had a "combernation," but, of course, I didn't say so. I only muttered that I shouldn't wonder if the world had changed considerably since their day, and perhaps things were even harder now.

Octavia scarcely listened to me—she was never much in the habit of listening to me—she was saying just then, as we came out of the book-store that appertained to the great publishing house, which she had finally decided should have the first chance to bring out "Evelyn Marchmont," that she hoped she was not indulging a wholly selfish ambition. Didn't I think that "Evelyn Marchmont" was a moral and helpful story?

"Well," I said, reflectively, "you have certainly punished the bad people and rewarded the good."

But Octavia looked at me doubtfully.

"You see, I don't know people like Evelyn or the rest," I added, doubtfully, "and so they don't seem real to me."

"Yes, that must be why they don't seem real to you," said Octavia, slowly. "But I wanted to write a story that should seem real to every one."

I had stupidly put a new doubt into her mind about her book; but something happened just then to drive all thoughts of the book out of our heads.

A gaunt female figure crossed the street in front of us, crossed on a run, with true country caution, although no vehicle bore down upon her, and a policeman stood ready to escort her. Could one mistake the crisp black curls and the high cheek-bones? If so, the gait with its queer little hitch was unmistakable! So was the ancient cashmere shawl and the perennial purple roses in the black velvet bonnet.

"Loveday!" gasped even near-sighted Octavia.

Loveday, who had not been beyond the Port for twenty years! I was actually numb with bewilderment, and when Octavia attempted to run across the street in pursuit of her, the policeman stopped her; a throng of vehicles was coming now, and we must wait. I saw the purple roses nodding above the heads of the crowd, as the tall, angular figure strode onward.

Was the whole household of Groundnut Hill Farm turning its steps surreptitiously toward the great metropolis? I wondered should we meet Cyrus or Dave around the next corner?

CHAPTER VIII
A CHANCE MEETING

"COULD it have been Loveday?" said Octavia, who never trusted her near-sighted eyes.

I said that I was very strongly under the impression that I knew Loveday by sight. Also that if I had not seen her face, or recognized her clothes, I should have known that she savored too strongly of Palmyra soil to have come from anywhere else.

"But Loveday in the city! My mind fails to grasp the idea. It's as if one of the old barn owls had preened his rusty feathers and taken a daytime flight into the world," said Octavia. "What could have induced her to do it?"

"The owl or Loveday? Care for its young—devotion to some one of us." I said, drawing upon my somewhat limited knowledge ofowl and human nature for motives. And then my mind was suddenly illumined as by a flash of lightning.

The photograph of the horse! There had been a method in Loveday's midnight madness. I wondered that I had not suspected before that her interest in it was in some way connected with Dave's difficulty. Alf Reeder's racer! What interest could Loveday have had in a race-horse except for some special reason?

I had fancied, in my sleepy stupidity, that she had cherished the photograph, and was having fancies about it, because Hiram had taken it. I thought she had tardily developed a pride in Hiram's photography, and that that was the reason for her visit to Uncle Horace's old carriage-house, where Hiram's wagon was stored. But it must have been a more striking idea than that which had "ketched a holt" of Loveday "between midnight and sun-up"—"ketched a holt" so powerfully as to have driven her from her peaceful couch.

How dull I had been not to see it! And yet, now, as I walked along the crowded sidewalk, I racked my brains in vain to find out what the photograph could possibly mean, and what had brought Loveday to the city.

"I'm afraid that Evelyn isn't altogether like a city girl," meditated Octavia aloud. Her mind had already reverted to her book, and Loveday was forgotten. "I see, now, how I might have made her different." She talked as if she had now had the benefit of several society seasons! "I'm afraid there is a good deal of Palmyra in her."

"Well, Palmyra is what you know best," I said, in my matter-of-fact way.

"A novel is a work of the imagination," Octavia declared with dignity—and a suspicion of redness in her cheeks.

It was natural, perhaps, that she should not like to have hints given her by a maker of sage cheese!

But I had not meant to hint. I didn't really understand, then, that people can betterwrite what they know. I only didn't see how they could possibly write anything else. But of course I knew that I hadn't an imagination like Octavia's.

The day that we felt to be big with fate for us dawned with an unsmiling April sky, and the nipping New England east wind, that is not elevating to the spirits.

As for me, I had no misgivings about my sage cheese—its reputation was already made—or my preserves, or my butter. Only sausages weighed upon my mind. They were as yet unproven. I could only boast of what Groundnut Hill Farm could do in that line, and bespeak a trial of its new commodities. And I meant to be very shrewd and business-like, and get the very best prices for all my wares. But it was "Evelyn Marchmont" that made the day seem momentous, and gave me the sickening, apprehensive feeling that made breakfast an impossibility.

Octavia wore the gentle dignity that made her quite impressive on the days of her kindergartenexhibition, as she walked toward the inner sanctum pointed out to us as the editorial office of the great publishing house. She approached an elderly man, who sat at a desk, and looked up with shrewd but kindly eyes from under a pair of very ferocious gray eyebrows. She began to explain her errand with gentle deliberation, extending toward him at the same time her precious package. He waved her, courteously but insistently, toward another desk, from which a younger man arose, thrusting his pen behind his ear with a preoccupied air and a patient expression which was not encouraging.

He broke in upon Octavia's slow and carefully modulated speech—Octavia is very slow, things are done so deliberately in Palmyra.

"I am sorry to say that our list is full, quite full for this year, and we are not now considering anything," he said, with perfect politeness, but with an air of absolute finality that made it impossible to say another word.

Octavia's lips were set firmly together, aswe walked out. There was really nothing to complain of; a publisher is under no obligation to "consider" a story if he knows that he doesn't wish to publish it. But in Palmyra we were treated as if we were of some consequence; here we were only units in the crowd; more than that, countrified young women stealing busy men's time to offer a probably worthless manuscript!

"How does a new writer get a hearing?" Octavia questioned drearily, when, at length, she opened her lips.

She repeated the question at the next publisher's, where we were invited to sit down, and a little more time was spent upon us, but with the same decision that it would be useless to have "Evelyn Marchmont" read.

"By means of short stories in the magazines often," said the publisher's editor, who did not look the stern destroyer of hope that he was.

"Couldn't—wouldn't it be possible that one who could not write short stories might besuccessful with a long one?" stammered Octavia, breathlessly and with blazing cheeks.

"Oh, quite possible, I should think," returned the editor, blandly, but with a trace of indifference in his tone; for we had stayed a good while.

“I should think you might perhaps find a publisher if you were willing to pay the expenses yourself,” he suggested, as we arose.

“Pay! why I expected to be paid at once,” gasped Octavia, losing her dignified deliberation in dismay.

The polite editor smiled in superior wisdom as he bowed us out.

There was much more of the same thing; I should not have the heart to write in detail the rebuffs which gradually caused a white line to appear around Octavia’s firmly-set lips—even if there were no risk of wearying my readers.

We found, at last, a minor publisher, who was willing to allow “Evelyn Marchmont” to be left with him on the chance that hisreaders would “get round to it” in the course of a month or two. He further encouraged us by the assurance that about one in five hundred of the manuscripts read in his establishment was worth publishing, and that, provided the book trade was brisk. It did not promise to be brisk at this time of the year.

Octavia came away and left her manuscript, with a long, lingering look behind, as one might confide one’s child to the tender mercies of a surgeon.

I dragged her into a restaurant, for it was now late in the afternoon, and made her have some tea.

“Of course I knew it would not be easy,” she said, looking at me across the little table, with tired eyes, that made my heart ache. “I have had enough disappointments with my short stories to teach me that. I’ve read enough about these things, too. But I didn’t dream that it could be so bad! Why, they look at you as if you were a disturber of thepeace, to have written a book! And to suggest that I should pay for it! What are publishers for?”

“Well, you see, they have to pay and take the chances,” I said, with the dispassionate candor of a business woman. “I suppose sometimes a book may not sell at all, and they may lose money. He said one in five hundred were not acceptable. And they don’t know how fine a story ‘Evelyn Marchmont’ is.”

“That’s it! Why don’t they read it and find out?” cried Octavia. “Two or three said, you know, that it was the wrong time of year for them. Bathsheba, I almost think they didn’t like our appearance!”—this slowly, as if it were not a new thought.

“Do you think that we may possibly look Palmyran? Nowadays the fashions travel everywhere, and I am sure Miss Jobyns has the latest styles.”

“Perhaps it would have been better if you had sent the manuscript,” I said dubiously.“We took their time, anyway, and that may have made them unfavorably disposed toward the book. But it is going to be read, and when they’ve read it, I’m sure they’ll want to publish it!”

Octavia took a swallow of tea that seemed to choke her, and set down the cup.

“I don’t think that any one will ever publish it. I have put a whole year of time and all of myself into it, and it is a dreary, miserable failure!” she said.

She drank her tea chokingly, but she would not eat. I had never seen Octavia's self-control so overthrown.

As we passed into the street I caught sight of a familiar head with sleek black braids. It turned toward me suddenly, and there was Alice Yorke's piquant, fascinating face. I glanced eagerly at her companion. It was not Estelle; but a very striking girl, whose costume was either eccentric or artistic, I could not, from my Palmyran point of view, be quite sure which. My impression wasonly a momentary one, for Alice Yorke immediately seized upon us.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you! It seems like a special providence!" she cried. "Estelle is with me, you know. She is at my friend's studio. My friend, Miss Carruthers," she interpolated, introducing the striking young lady, whose laughing gray eyes and slightly turned-up nose were winning, but vaguely incongruous with her carriage and her toilet.

"And Estelle is—oh, in such a state! You must come to her at once. She has fainted and has had hysterics. And she has always been so strong and self-restrained!"

"Those self-restrained people, when they do give way!" her friend remarked, sagely.

"You see, she expected to sell her pictures at once, and no one would buy them," continued Alice Yorke, who had drawn us into a doorway, out of the way of the crowd. "Of course, she will not mind having you know."

"Oh, the poor child! the poor child!" cried Octavia. And I know I had never heard her speak of Estelle in just that tone before in my life.

"No one ought to expect to sell pictures at once," continued Alice, judicially. "My friend, Miss Carruthers, who is an artist, says so. You have to try and try, until you have made a name for yourself."

"Then how do you begin to make a name?" demanded Octavia, almost fiercely, sympathetic from the depths of her own experience.

"Well, you must have originality, or strike the popular taste in some way," replied Miss Carruthers. "I can't exactly say, because I haven't done it yet," she added, with a frank laugh.

"The poor child!" repeated Octavia, from her full heart. That Estelle should have to face these baffling problems that had overcome her filled Octavia with a new sympathy for her. And that one touch of sympathy hadmade her closer kin than she ever had been before. "Let us go to her at once! How could you leave her alone?" she added, reproachfully.

And then the superiority of the elder sister, of the practical New England stock suddenly asserted itself. "How could the child be so foolish as to think she could sell her pictures! I could have told her," she said.

Our eyes met then, and I never did think that Octavia had much sense of humor, but she laughed drearily.

“You’re quite right, Bathsheba,” she said—although I had not made a remark. “I am not the one to say anything.”

We followed the girls up over the hill where the State House stood, an imposing building, with a gilded dome, that looked curiously frivolous to me, like a child’s toy, and into a stately, old-fashioned mansion, on a back street. It was only a stone’s throw from the busy centre, but as peaceful as Palmyra on a Sunday morning.

Up-stairs we went, in this stately mansion—up and up, until suddenly we were ushered into the most charming room that my eyes had ever beheld, with a quaintly-shaped bow-window hung out, so that one could see between the long, long rows of roofs—it made me think of looking through our old spy-glass—a beautiful blue glimpse of river—which actually brought the tears to my eyes, as if I had been away from our river for a twelvemonth. But it was not at the first moment that I saw the beauty of the room or the lovely river vista.

Estelle was lying on a couch covered with a leopard skin, over which her pretty yellow hair hung disheveled. Her eyelids were red, and her face blotched from weeping. Not even in her childhood, not even in the period when she did undeniably “make faces,” had I ever seen our delicately-reticent and self-contained Estelle in such a condition of frank overthrow as this.

She sprang up, and then, as if the sightof us were an additional humiliation, she sank back again and covered her face with her hands.

“Where—where in the world did you come from?” she gasped. “Oh, there are such perfectly dreadful people in Boston! I want to get home to Palmyra—and yet I can’t go, I can’t until I’ve shown my drawings to another dreadful editor; it’s a woman, too—that will be even worse!”

“Estelle, dearie, I know all about it!” Octavia knelt beside the couch and clasped the slender figure in her arms.

Estelle withdrew her hands from her face, and stared at her, round-eyed, like a child.

“You? You couldn’t possibly know anything about it!” she said, with a thrill of astonishment in her tone.

I had wondered sometimes if she had never guessed at Octavia’s literary ventures, since she had so often brought the dreadful packages home in the mail. It was evident, now, that she never had. Perhaps that was not strange,since she was a child when Octavia began to write, and her bump of curiosity had never been large.

“I—I rather think you would believe that I know about it, if I should tell you what I’ve been through this very day!” said Octavia, and sat down flat upon the floor.

Estelle sat up. And she looked at Octavia as if she were seeing her for the first time in her life, as, indeed, in a certain sense I think she was. I will admit that I was not altogether acquainted with Octavia in this mood myself.

“You!” repeated Estelle, in a bewildered way.

“I have written a book. I thought it was a beautiful story. I put my whole self into it, and a year—more than a year—of work, and no publisher will look at it! Or, at least none would until we had gone the rounds, and then received no encouragement at all. And I have to wait and wait to hear from it. And the worst is that I know no one will ever have it—I know it is bad!”

“I don’t believe you ever wrote anything bad,” said Estelle, loyally. “And I don’t believe that my pictures are bad, although they all said so. One dealer said I might leave them with him, although he feared it would be of no use, because his patrons were of the class that understood art! Think of that! Another thought that I didn’t understand composition or color. Some of them were quite civil about the drawings. I found the publishers better than the picture-dealers, but they all had their regular corps of artists—all but one firm. I am to go there to-morrow to show my drawings to the editor of a children’s magazine. But if people won’t buy my paintings, I know they won’t have my drawings.”

Octavia checked the encouraging words that rose to her lips. Her conscience would not allow her to say that she thought any one would buy Estelle’s drawings.

“But I must sell them. I want themoney!” Estelle added, with a quivering lip.

“That’s always the way; things won’t sell when you want the money,” said Miss Carruthers, easily. She had sunk down upon a hassock, and allowed her skirts to drift around her in a way that reminded me of the “cheeses” of our childhood, while she still held her picturesque head in a way that suggested posing.

“I know!” she continued, answering my surprised glance, for in so luxurious an atmosphere one did not expect to hear of the need of money. “When Ned and I lived in New York, before Uncle Thaddeus left us this house and his money, we were as poor as church mice. I had to sell my pictures to help Ned pay his college expenses. It was a country college, too, and he lived very cheaply. He has gone to Harvard now; I wanted him to be near me, but I’m afraid it isn’t very good for him there. However, there are temptations everywherefor a boy, especially if he has money.”

Her pose had vanished; there was a pucker of anxiety between her brows. Were all brothers a trouble? I wondered, thinking of Dave, certainly Cyrus never had been.

It was for Dave that Estelle wanted the money. I was sure that the loan had not yet been paid, and probably the dishonorable fellow who had betrayed him to the college authorities was pressing him for the money. He was as yet only an apprentice in the shipyard, and received little or no wages. Cyrus and Uncle Horace treated him exactly like any other apprentice, somewhat to my disgust, as well as Estelle’s.

“You never saw me behave like this before—not in all my life, did you?” asked Estelle, suddenly sitting upright, and turning up her disheveled locks. “It was the unexpected that overcame me. Perhaps it would have been better if I had listened to you, for you never believed in me, either of you.”

“I believe in you, now!” cried Octavia. “Oh, I don’t know about the pictures! What does it matter what people can do? Talent is only an accident. It’s what people are that counts!”

Now it had occurred to me several times to try to comfort Octavia in that sort of way; but we are not given to preaching in our family, and I feared that the author of “Evelyn Marchmont” would find me trite, and somewhat of a Job’s comforter as well. “You are true and strong,” continued Octavia, while Estelle stared at her round-eyed, and I actually found my mouth hanging helplessly open with amazement—like Jonas Hickey’s, at the poorhouse, who isn’t even half-witted.

It was a little queer to regard Estelle as strong, just when she was giving way to tears like a child!

“You’re not thinking of yourself, like me,” continued Octavia. “You’re doing it all for Dave. You’ve been true to Dave, and I—Ihaven’t. I’ve been too hard and careless, to him and you always! This—this has shown it to me. I don’t quite know why! I suppose it’s the sympathy.”

God’s providence! “God’s providence is mine inheritance,” rang in my ears as if some one had said it. It seems sometimes—often, often, as we grow older, that we can see God’s great web in its weaving. Tiny threads, unconsidered trifles, and all woven into the wonderful pattern of life!

But the situation was becoming a little strained for Palmyra girls in a stranger’s studio. Octavia felt it, and arose suddenly to her feet with a murmured apology. Miss Carruthers showed a ready tact. She took the matter lightly, although there were sympathetic tears in her frank gray eyes, and insisted that we should all stay to tea.

It was served in the studio, and was a delightfully merry affair, considering that our visit had begun so tearfully. Miss Bocock, an elderly Englishwoman, who lived withMiss Carruthers, as companion and chaperon, declined tea, and devoted herself to embroidery and a vinaigrette, which she offered to Octavia and Estelle, evidently on account of their tearful appearance, and somewhat to their embarrassment.

Octavia seemed to wholly recover her spirits, or else she felt that she had shown quite enough of her wounded feelings to strangers. Estelle was very quiet and occasionally stole a pleased and puzzled glance at Octavia, as if she had formed an agreeable new acquaintance, but didn’t quite know what to make of her.

I was making a furtive study of the beautiful room, hoping that Estelle might some day have one just like it, when the door opened and a young man came in, who did not need to be introduced as the brother of our winsome hostess.

He was almost but not quite her masculine counterpart; not quite, for he lacked both her fineness and her picturesqueness, and his nosewas more decidedly snub. But when one met his eyes, gray like hers, one found the same frankness. On the whole, he seemed like a rough and unsuccessful masculine copy of his sister; or, rather, as Burns’ song has it, as if nature had “tried her prentice hand” on him, and then had “made the lassie-o.”

His sister made him useful at once, in pouring the tea.

"He's used to it, and does it better than any girl," she explained, and I discovered in her an almost feverish eagerness to keep him and make things agreeable for him. He had not just come from Cambridge, it appeared, although he evaded, for some time, his sister's questions concerning his whereabouts for the day, finally revealing that he had been spending the afternoon with some college chums.

His sister started slightly at this admission, and I saw the sugar-tongs shake in her firm, shapely fingers.

"Oh, you haven't been to one of those dreadful races again, Ned?" she asked, reproachfully.And I thought that the family revelations were not going to be all on our side.

"I do like to see a fine horse," said the young man, as if in extenuation. "And I suppose when God made them he intended them to use their speed, didn't he?" he added, with a little uneasy laugh.

"I'm sure he didn't intend them to be raced! It's wicked, besides being coarse and horrid!" his sister returned, with vehemence. "And I would rather be poor, ten times poorer than we were, than that you should come to such things as that!" Her cheeks blazed and there were tears in her eyes, and my heart was so full of sympathy that I could almost have told him, then and there, for a warning, the dreadful things that had happened to our Dave.

"Ten times as poor, Peggy? that would be pretty stiff," he said, meditatively. "Then I should never have gone to college at all, for there was a race-course pretty near us up thereat the country college. But it wasn't there, it was in Kentucky, where we were brought up, that I learned to love horses.

"However, I haven't been betting, and you needn't worry. I've always known that it was a sneaking thing to get your gain out of another fellow's loss. Even up there in the country, where there was such a fuss made, it was the horses that I cared for—not the money.

"I saw about the queerest figure to-day that I ever saw at a race. It was a country old maid. I'm sure she was an old maid—of forty odd, with skimpy black ringlets and clothes that might have come out of the ark. And she was asking every one to point out the different horses to her. She begged me to tell her which was Alf Reeder's racer. She said she was so ashamed of herself that it seemed as if she should sink right through the ground, but she did want to know which was Alf Reeder's racer.

"But she seemed to forget all about thehorses, after a while, and went to preaching on the evils of horse-racing. I wish you could have heard her preach! Her homely, rough-featured face was all alight. When she got thoroughly under way you wouldn't have believed that she was the same person.

"She gathered a crowd around her. I don't suppose many of those fellows had ever been inside a church, and they evidently meant, at first, to have some fun out of

her; but the laughter and jeering died out. She was in such deadly earnest! That sort of thing is pretty sure to win respect when there is no self-interest about it. There was no cant about her, either; and she seemed to have so much plain common sense that one could hardly call her a crank.

"Some of those who had hooted at first looked really ashamed of themselves before she got through. As for me, I thought of Savonarola and those fellows. I caught myself wishing I could get a chance to explain to her that I hadn't come to bet, but only tosee the horses. I laughed at myself a little for having that feeling, but before she got through I began to think she was right, and it was a disgraceful thing to be there, anyway! She talked about touching pitch and being defiled, and causing one's brother to offend, and all that; things that I've heard all my life, of course, but she had such a forcible, original way of putting them. Her quaint dialect added to the effect of her originality. But, after all, I think it was the heart of the woman, showing in every word she said, that made her exhortation so impressive. She reminded me of the preacher in one of Jean Ingelow's poem's, 'so anxious not to go to heaven alone.'"

Octavia leaned toward me and whispered, breathlessly:

"Loveday? Could it have been Loveday?"

CHAPTER IX
A STUDIO TEA

I KNEW in a moment that it was Loveday who had preached at the race-course. I could guess at a reason for her going there, of which Octavia and Estelle knew nothing, for she had not shown them Hiram Nute's photograph of a horse which had caused the exciting idea to "ketch a holt" of her in the middle of the night.

I was still in the dark as to what the idea might be, but it seemed probable that it was connected with Dave's trouble. If Dave had been so wicked as to bet, I could not see that it made any difference which horse he had bet upon, but I trusted Loveday sufficiently to be sure that there was some reason for her mysterious actions.

I could see her gaunt figure there amongthe coarse, rough men, the color bright upon her high cheek-bones—perhaps wavering a little; but I knew there was no wavering of her courage in the "giving of her testimony." In our church the women kept silent, for Parson Grover strongly shared St. Paul's opinion on that subject, but Loveday went to the Methodist Church and always "spoke in meeting."

In his eagerness to tell us about the woman preacher the young man had set down the dainty porcelain teacup he had been holding and stood, leaning upon the back of his sister's chair; his boyish, somewhat heavy face lighted up and seemed to grow finer, so that the resemblance to his sister was more striking.

"I kept very near to the woman while she was preaching," he continued, "partly to hear what she said, partly because it was such a rough crowd that I was afraid they might be really rude to her—get to pushing and jostling her, you know."

The young man glanced with unconscious complacency at his brawny wrists and arms and I began to really like him. It made my heart beat quickly to think of Loveday in such a crowd as that; and yet I could not quite realize that Loveday could fail anywhere, to be mistress of the situation!

"While the jeering and hooting went on," the young man continued, "the crowd shouted out ridiculous questions as well. What horse was she trying to make a book on? She'd better get the hayseed out of her hair before she went to preaching! Did she ever see anything but a plough-horse in Greenappleville, where she came from!

"'There ain't no finer horses anywheres than there is raised in our county!' she cried indignantly." He actually imitated Loveday's voice, as well as her peculiar dialect. Oh, there was no doubt that it was Loveday whom he meant! "'And our horses are put to noble and fittin' uses,' she went on, 'helpin' folks to till the sile and get their daily breadand serve their Maker. There ain't none o' them put to the evil one's service, like these poor creturs—leastways I hope there ain't.' She uttered the last clause a little doubtfully and the crowd laughed.

"Some jeering fellow asked her if she had come to put up her money on Alf Reeder's racer. She answered that she hadn't 'done no such a thing. She had come in the fear of the Lord to find out something that would lift a burden from a back where

it didn't belong—or where at least she thought it didn't belong.'" Octavia and I looked at each other. "She had come in the fear of the Lord and she had been so eager to find out something that she hadn't thought much about the wickedness, but it had been borne in upon her so that the Lord wouldn't let her go away without raising her voice against it.

"'When your gain is your fellow-cretur's loss how are you better than any kind of a thief?' she asked. And then she began to say things—well, pretty hard things aboutthose who thought it was all right to come if they didn't bet. I only wish I could repeat them just as she said them! I wasn't any the less struck by them because the coat fitted! But I can't make you understand the magnetism—or whatever one may call it—about her personality."

"I'm very glad she made such an impression upon you, Ned," said his sister quietly. The young man sat down, looking a little shamefaced, and the girls began assiduously to pour his tea.

"She did make an impression on me," he said. "I wouldn't have you think I was just mimicking her," he continued as he stirred his tea. "I only wanted to give you an idea of her quaint dialect—it seemed to add to the effect of simplicity and straightforwardness that she produced. I'm sure you never heard anything like it in your lives!"

Hadn't we? Octavia and I looked at each other again.

"It sounds like our Loveday's dialect," saidEstelle, who still looked like a lily down-beaten by the rain and had shown but a languid interest in the conversation, partly I thought because she shrank from the subject of horse-races.

"It seems a little like Loveday altogether," she added reflectively. "I think if she hadn't lived such a retired life she might be capable of doing some such thing as that. Of course, now, she would be simply terrified in such a crowd. She'd be like a pelican of the wilderness and an owl of the desert if anything were to drive her into the world. I can't think of anything that would drive her here to the city; she hates to go even as far as the Port."

Estelle looked up suddenly from my face to Octavia's and something that she read there was answered by a questioning gleam in her eyes.

"It seems so much like Loveday," she murmured.

"I hope you understand that I wouldn't ridicule her, for the world," repeated NedCarruthers. "I respected her, I reverenced her. And she had more effect on me than all your eloquence has ever had, Peggy. She made me really determine never to go to a horse-race again. You see, Peggy, I'm a little used to your preaching, but hers was of a new kind. When she said it was 'a livin' shame to take the noblest dumb creturs the Lord ever made and make 'em minister to one of the most dishonorable of human vices,' why, it really struck me that the point was well taken! 'An' you say that you ain't betting but only lookin' on, what be you a-doin' but encouragin' the wickedness in a mean-spirited way?' she said. Then she quoted Scripture; 'he that

gathereth not with me scattereth abroad'—You ought to have heard her voice ring out on that! She had one of those high-keyed, vibrating voices that have such a carrying power. I really think"—the young man stirred his tea with reflective deliberation, "that I shall never go to a horse-race again."

"Then Heaven bless the preacher-woman!" his sister exclaimed with an undertone of real earnestness. "I only wish you had met her before you went to college," she added.

There was evidently a hidden meaning in the wish, for it made the young man color to the roots of his blonde hair.

"You do not know what hard work Peggy makes of being a sister," he said, glancing up from his tea, half laughing, and yet, as it was easy to see, really shamefaced and embarrassed. "I've been an awful lot of trouble to her."

"We have had some experience in being sisters ourselves," said Octavia drily.

"Our boys are perfectly lovely!" Estelle remarked decidedly, and scowling at her tea-cake, since it was not quite the thing to openly scowl at Octavia. Estelle had become quite too uncomfortably sensitive since Dave's misdoing.

"They are all perfectly lovely—from the proper point of view. That's what I tellPeggy," said Ned Carruthers, like a graceless young scamp. "But, seriously, I suppose I was some trouble to Peggy up there at the country college, after we first had the money left us, you know. I went to horse-races up there. The preacher-woman is quite right; I wish I had met her before as you say, Peggy, and then I might not have gone. Perhaps, however, I was in a more receptive frame of mind from having gotten into trouble by means of horse-races. There was not so rough a crowd either up there in the country, as I saw to-day. There were a good many innocent and guileless farm boys who were the ready prey of the sharpers."

"Were the college students allowed to go?" interrupted Estelle.

"Oh, no, they were not allowed," admitted Ned Carruthers, and blushed a genuine, honest boyish blush. He had, in fact, had a little difference with the faculty on that very point, he added with a side glance at his sister. We began to understand what thetrouble was that Peggy had had with him and sympathy stirred in our hearts.

"I didn't leave the country college solely because I wished to be at Harvard and near Peggy. I should probably have done that, in time, after Peggy decided that she wished to come to Boston and live in what she calls this lovely old house, but I should not have done it so soon if the faculty had not voted to dispense with my society because I went to a horse-race."

He looked as if he were really ashamed and were moved by an impulse to be honest about himself—an impulse perhaps engendered by the experiences of the day.

I felt, ridiculously of course, that it was vaguely incongruous that Miss Carruthers should be so stylish and so artistic and yet have a brother lying heavily upon her heart, just as we plain country girls had.

“There were a lot of fellows at that college who got along without being expelled. Give me some credit for honesty at least!” theyoung man went on. “There was a big fellow there, overgrown but with splendid biceps, a handsome young fellow, who ran off to the races and lost some money. I rather think he was new to the business. He forged a check—on his uncle, I think,—and then funked; got into a regular panic about it and borrowed the money of me. We had just come into our money then, Peggy and I, and I had plenty.

“And if the faculty when they gave me leave to go didn’t hold that very fellow up to me as an example. I lost my temper and gave him away—yes, I did, Peggy, and I know it was a nasty thing to do. I never told you that part of the trouble before, did I, Peggy?”

I pressed Estelle’s foot under the table. Her bosom was heaving and her blue eyes flashing fire. Could that conceited young man think that her feeling was all for him? He was consuming a great quantity of tea-cakes and did not seem to be observing anything beyond his plate.

Of course I had gathered, from the veryfirst, that he meant Dave, and I was inwardly tempestuous, myself, but these were Alice Yorke’s friends, and Miss Peggy Carruthers had been very kind and hospitable to us all. And it was so dreadful to have a scene! I did hope Estelle was not going to make one.

“You needn’t pity him,”—as his sister uttered an exclamation of surprise. “I shan’t, at least not until he pays me my money. He has written to me once or twice as if he really meant to, but I never expect to get it.”

“You will get it! It is our Dave, my own brother whom you are saying those dreadful things about. And they are not true, they’re perfectly false!” Estelle burst forth like a small cyclone. “There is some dreadful mistake about—about his going to the races. He never had the least taste for that sort of thing; he never had any coarse tastes at all!” And my hand on her arm—I gave it a pinch—had no effect whatever.

The young man arose to his feet, his face actually pale with consternation.

“I’m sure you’ll believe that I didn’t—that I never imagined such a thing!” he stammered.

“It’s no matter about me—about us,” she returned hotly. “You only care because you said it before us. Of course you wouldn’t have done that if you had known! You have no right to think such things about Dave! And to dare to think that he won’t pay you,—Dave who would work his fingers to the bone, who would starve, rather than leave a debt unpaid!”

“But I didn’t know anything about him. If somebody had only given me a hint!” groaned the young man. “I knew that Miss Yorke lived in the same place that his letters came from, but I didn’t think anything about it.”

He looked really distressed and he halted and stammered in his speech like a school-boy.

Peggy Carruthers was very red in the face and I fancied that she was inwardly torn bythe conflict between her duties as a hostess and her resentment of Estelle's plain-speaking. I was sure that she was wishing that Alice Yorke had not brought her rude and countryfied friends to her studio.

"I—I wish you wouldn't think anything about the money," he stammered on. "Of course it doesn't signify at all! I would have bitten my tongue out before I would have said it if I had known! I don't think it was quite the thing; quite kind of you I mean, to let me go on talking when—when he is your brother!"

"All you think of is that you have spoken out before us!" cried Estelle tempestuously again. "You don't care at all that you have ill-treated and misjudged him!"

It was the old story. Estelle was fiercely resentful against any one who did not believe in Dave. While, under the circumstances, it was surely scarcely reasonable to expect that the young man should do so.

"My dears, my dears, I trust that nothingunpleasant is happening!" interrupted Miss Bocock, whose serenity rivaled that of the Minerva on the pedestal beside her. She looked from one disturbed face to another with a little deprecating smile.

"Things seem to have become very unfortunately personal," said Alice Yorke nervously. "I am sure no one meant——"

Octavia came to the rescue—with the dignity that never had failed to impress any one but the publishers.

"It is unfortunate," she said. "Of course we were not sure whom Mr. Carruthers meant when he began to speak. And then the subject is a very painful one to us."

She had not a word of blame for Estelle, she linked herself with her! That I thought would not have happened yesterday.

"We must be excused for feeling keenly, for our brother's expulsion from college was a very bitter disappointment to him and to us. And, as my sister said, nothing could have been more unlike him than the wrong-doingof which he was accused. So we—we cannot help thinking that there is some mistake, some mystery, especially as we cannot doubt that the woman whom you heard preaching at the race-course was our—our servant, our housekeeper, our friend—Loveday."

"Loveday? why, it seems like her, but how could it be?" murmured Estelle.

"She had hinted to me that she had some reason for believing that Dave was innocent," continued Octavia. "When I saw her in the street to-day, I felt that her secret errand was to discover something that would clear Dave. When I knew that she had gone to a race-course and heard what she had said there, I was doubly sure."

"Dear, sweet, lovely old Loveday!" murmured Estelle, with the tears running down her cheeks. "But what can she have found out?"

"You make me feel more a brute than ever," said Ned Carruthers ruefully and casting distressed glances at Estelle's tear-stained face.

“I’m sorry if I was rude,” said Estelle penitently. A gleam of hope was lighting her face like an April sunbeam. “It has been so dreadful to me that people should think such things of Dave and I’ve borne it so long! And it seems like the ruin of his life—only I know that he wouldn’t let it be—nobody but me knows what stuff there is in Dave! He is my own brother and of course I couldn’t bear not to have him at least what every man should be—honest and honorable and—clean. I couldn’t bear even to have Dave smoke—he never did.”

She looked really beautiful in her earnestness, although her cheeks were blotchy with tears. “And even our own wouldn’t believe in him—no one has but me,—and perhaps Loveday, but I didn’t know that.”

I saw Octavia press her hand tenderly under the table—but I knew she was feeling, with me, that there had been quite enough of our own affairs.

“I am sure he must be a most lovableyoung man,” said Miss Bocock politely. She looked a trifle disturbed, now, and I thought that the gold-thread legs of the stork that she was embroidering were a little wabbly. “Young men will have their little differences; only a trifling misunderstanding, in this case, I am sure.”

Ned Carruthers was looking at Estelle as if he had never seen her before. In fact, I think he had come in wrought to so high a tension by his experience at the race-course—by our Loveday’s preaching, of all queer things!—that he had not especially observed any of us, but had rather regarded us collectively as an audience upon which to pour out his pent-up feelings. He looked at her without a trace of the admiration which a young man naturally bestows upon a pretty girl, but with an abashed and downcast air, as before a Daniel come to judgment—with rather more reverence than I thought that Estelle with her tearful impetuosity really deserved.

“Honest, honorable and clean!” he repeated meditatively and almost solemnly. “That wouldn’t mean betting at a horse-race or—or giving another fellow away, would it? Well, I have turned over a new leaf—but—what a mess I have made of things, this afternoon!”

The conclusion was so boyish that we all laughed.

Miss Carruthers had recovered herself and tried to restore a light and merry tone to the conversation. But that was not easy. Miss Bocock asked to see the contents of Estelle’s portfolio and Peggy Carruthers pinned them up, in effective positions, all over the studio.

Now I did not feel at all sure about them; it seemed to me that they were queer. I wondered a little that none of the dealers would have her paintings. I still meant to hang one over the mantel in the spare bed-room, but the drawings didn’t look to me like other people’s. Peggy Carruthers praised them extravagantly, however. I suspectedher of being a little insincere, from a kindly desire—very kindly under the circumstances—to soothe Estelle’s wounded feelings. Miss Bocock thought them very pretty, but criticized a little, preferring the artistic methods of her youth and quarreling

with the “poster” style of her storks. Even embroidery had been invaded by the helter-skelter, touch-and-go fashion. For her part she liked finish.

She was cried down by the younger people but Ned Carruthers said ruefully:

“We seem fated to hurt you here, Miss Dupont.”

“Oh, I’m used to it about my work. I’m all full of little stabs! but those don’t count—comparatively,” she said. She made it quite evident that she had not forgiven him Dave’s injuries, for all his penitence. I thought our hostess was a little relieved when we came away; a serene atmosphere was evidently what suited her.

Alice Yorke took Estelle away with herto stay with a relative in town. She was to visit the editor who “might like to see her drawings,” in the morning and she wanted us to go with her.

As for me, I was going into the region of cheese and preserves and possible sausages. Practical affairs were likely to settle my mind after all this disturbing mystery about Dave.

But I certainly was unable to compose myself now, or to cease wondering what Loveday could have discovered to account for her strange pilgrimage. I was anxious, too, about what had become of her; Loveday did seem so entirely out of her element in the city.

I had no appetite for the dreary boarding-house dinner and after it was over I managed to slip out of the house. Octavia had lain down, thoroughly tired out by the emotions and excitements of the day.

I had remembered suddenly the slip of paper that was constantly fluttering out ofLoveday’s Daily Food—the little devotional book that she carried in her pocket. There was written upon it the address of an aunt whom she meant, sometime, to go to see in an old-fashioned street in the West End of the city. I remembered the street and number perfectly, so many times had I picked up the scrap of paper for her in more youthful days, vaguely feeling it to be a curious thing that Loveday should have an aunt. It was still very early in the spring evening and the street was not far away.

As I went down the steps I met Ned Carruthers coming up. He had heard us mention where we were staying and he had taken the liberty to come to see if we could give him Loveday’s address. Now it was one thing to intrude myself upon the privacy that Loveday evidently intended to preserve and another thing to aid and abet a strange young man in doing it. I said that I had only a guess as to her whereabouts and that I did not feel at liberty to divulge.

“But you can’t go alone, in the evening,” he insisted.

I replied, a little stiffly, that Palmyran conventions were not those of the city and I was not afraid.

“It is my business, you know,” he said stoutly, in the boyish way that made one like him. “Anyway you can’t hinder me from finding Alf Reeder and his horse.”

CHAPTER X
BUSINESS EFFORTS AND A DISCOVERY

"I KNEW I wa'n't one that could do anything underhanded without being ketched at it, I knew I wa'n't!" said Loveday, rocking violently in her aunt's old-fashioned haircloth rocking-chair, just as she did in the kitchen chintz-covered one at Groundnut Hill when she was greatly disturbed in mind.

I had found her in a little dingy house in a narrow, stuffy street, that meandered down a hill, apparently into Ethiopia, for it swarmed, at the foot, whither I had wandered seeking, with dusky faces.

I was forced to the conclusion that Loveday was not glad to see me. She did not like to be "ketched." She had not explained, at all; she had allowed me to think that she had come to the city merely to visit her aunt,until I confided to her that I knew about the race-course.

"No, I never found what I came for. I never found it, at all!" she replied, in answer to my eager question, and she said it in a tone of discouragement that was rare for Loveday. "I expect I'm an old crank. Mebbe the idee that ketches a holt of you between midnight and sun-up is some like a dream; that's what I been a-thinkin', as I set here a-rockin'."

"Loveday, won't you tell me what the idea was?" I begged.

Loveday drew a long breath and hesitated. "No, I ain't a-goin' to tell nobody," she said, positively, at length—"that is, without I have to tell Hiram, for I ain't a-goin' to give it up entirely until I set Hiram on to it. He's got to have a tunin' spell, Hiram has, when he gets home from peddlin', and then he'll go to photographin' ag'in. Goin' round up country he may come acrost the man I want to find—that's Alf Reeder. He's a man thatowns race-horses. I wrote to Hiram when I found that photograph and he didn't 'pear to know anything about him, couldn't even remember where the photograph was took. Even if the man is found I ain't anyways sure that he'll know what—what I want to find out. I see in a paper that Alf Reeder's horse was a-goin' to race, over to that terrible place where I went, to-day, and off I come and left Viola to make soggy pie-crust, and scorch the tablecloths! I'm an old crank and I know I be! I'd better 'a' been to home, a-makin' my soft soap, and darnin' Leander's pantaloons, that he's a-sufferin' for. I forgot that folk's duty was apt to lay where the Lord had sot 'em, and as my grandfather used to say, their luck was apt to be a-straddlin' the backyard fence."

"O Loveday! you were so much better than the rest of us. No one except Estelle has tried to do anything for the poor boy. And you did help, Loveday; it was Providence that led you to that place!" And Itold her about Ned Carruthers and how strongly he had been impressed by her sermon.

"I bore my testimony," said Loveday. "I couldn't do no less! The wickedness of it all was so bore in upon me that I most forgot what I come for. Yes, I did, all of a

sudden! I never hardly knew what I was a-sayin', but I reckon mebbe the Lord was on my side. They was a-hootin' and a-jeerin', but it got stiller toward the last. You don't say the young man was really took hold of?—and the same one that told on our poor boy?" Loveday called him Mr. David, very respectfully, to his face, and to outsiders, but never to me. "That does look some like the Lord's leadin's—he don't lead folks away from home so often as they think he does."

"Loveday, did you ever say anything to David about what you thought or suspected?" I asked, for I had always a good opinion of straightforward methods.

"I tried it. But you can't get a nearnessto him when he ain't a mind to let you; you couldn't when he wa'n't more'n five years old. 'Why, what are you a-drivin' at, Loveday?' says he, and his handsome face that's jest like his mother's, got as red as fire. 'Does it make any difference,' says he, 'what horse a fellow bet on so long as he didn't win?' says he. And he said it so kind of reckless that it made my blood run cold. For one of our boys to speak like that! And all the time he looked so manly and noble you couldn't have no realizin' sense that he was the mean and foolish kind that bets. When I come off and left him—it was down in the shipyard and he was hammerin' away, all the time, and wouldn't pay hardly a mite of attention to me—I turned back and out of the fulness of my heart my mouth spoke, 'Mr. David, I don't believe no such a thing!' says I. 'You're the child of your sainted ma,' says I, 'and the grandchild of your sainted grandpa, and it ain't noways likely that you ever done any such a thing!' That 'peared to be reflectin'kind of unfavorable on his pa, so I said, right off quick, 'Your pa, too, he was a gentleman, if he was an artist, and he wouldn't never a-done no such mean thing!'

"He laughed, but he looked queer, too; he looked real queer.

"'Do you s'pose, Loveday,' says he, 'that I should 'a' let myself be expelled and brought to this for somethin' that I never done?' says he.

"I was kind of beat, for a minute, then I said, 'It don't 'pear as if you would. There ain't nothin' in this livin' world that would make it right for you to do it.'

"'Isn't there, Loveday? Isn't there?' he says, and he stopped hammering for the first time and turned and looked at me.

"'There's such a thing as sacrificin' yourself for others in a way that's ag'in sanctified common sense,' says I."

"You think he sacrificed himself for others, Loveday?" I interrupted. "Then itmust have been for Rob. But I don't see how that could possibly have been."

"I don't know as I do," said Loveday, leaning back wearily in her rocker. "And yet I can't bring myself to believe no evil of that boy. He was mischievous, some, when he was a child, and he would keep a-drawin' things and pesterin' his teachers, but the best of folks has their failures and that was born in him. But he was the honestest youngster and would look you square in the face and tell you jest what he'd been up to. His close-mouthed fits wa'n't never about any of his own pranks. You never could get him to tell of anybody else."

“But it couldn’t have been Rob,” I repeated, answering what I knew was Loveday’s thought.

“It doesn’t ’pear to be possible,” said Loveday. “But, then! when they go away from home you can’t tell how they’ll turn out. I shouldn’t wonder if some of them colleges was hot-beds of iniquity.

“‘Loveday, you don’t know the world,’ says the boy to me. ‘Palmyra ain’t the world!’ says he.”

Loveday rocked. Suddenly she leaned toward me eagerly. “And yet, I believe in that boy! I believe in him!” she said, with conviction, “and if I’d ’a’ been your uncle, or Cyrus, or anybody that had a right, I’d ’a’ gone to that college. I’d ’a’ gone to where them races was and found out more about how things was!”

“Dear Loveday, you have been more loyal to him than any of us—except his own sister!”

“Miss Estelle! She’s a child yet,” said Loveday, sententiously, and I saw that she did not like my exception. Even Loveday had her limitations and she could not realize that eighteen was grown-up; certainly not while one still made pictures. Loveday was going home to Palmyra soon, she said. The noise of the city “flew to her head” and Viola’s soggy pie-crust and Leander’s unmendedpantaloons were a weight upon her mind.

The aunt, a mild, little, very old woman, with an incongruously big, guttural voice, came into the room and set forth many reasons why Loveday should stay with her, or visit her oftener, but Loveday was not to be persuaded, declaring that “the Lord hadn’t sot her where there was none too much of her and she wa’n’t one that could be hoppin’ back and forth like a parched pea.”

“She’s got property and plenty to do for her,” said Loveday to me at the door, “and I hain’t got a tallent for livin’ in the city, nohow. It roars like a bull of Bashan and there’s too much of it. I’m one that likes things in moderation, and it hurts my feelin’s to meet so many folks that I don’t know.”

I aroused Octavia, in the gray of the morning. “I’ve been thinking,” I said, “that you needn’t go about with me to-day. You might go with Estelle instead. You know she said she would call here before she set out.”

Now I had several motives in making this suggestion and they all seemed to me very good and praiseworthy ones. In the first place I felt that I could drive a better bargain in sage cheese and preserves, and possibly sausages, by myself, than with Octavia, who, I felt, had a mind above these things, and an unconfessed shrinking from such sordid traffic. Another motive was to foster the sympathy so suddenly developed between Octavia and Estelle. Octavia’s aloofness from “the aliens” had always caused me pangs.

“But there’ll be Alice Yorke,” said Octavia, sleepily considering. “I think we’d better all go together, everywhere. The cheese and sage may be encouraging. I’ve seen

the reception that the world gives to literature; it may be enlarging to know how it receives sausages."

This was bitterly said, but Octavia laughed a little at herself, and added that of course she did not really think that "Evelyn Marchmont" was literature.

I did, and I believed that the world would yet confess it, but just then my mind was set upon the vending of my own plebeian wares. The trouble about Dave had been brought home to me afresh. I almost believed in his innocence, and the overthrow of his prospects in life and his uncongenial toil seemed suddenly more than I could bear. I was determined that his debt to Ned Carruthers should be paid at once; he should at least be relieved from that humiliation.

And on that morning I was resolved that I would, if it were possible, repair the family fortunes. If literature and art could not do it, then sausages must!

"We'll all go," said Octavia, as she made her toilet. It is generally Octavia who settles things. "And, oh, I do hope that poor child isn't going to be altogether disappointed about her pictures!"

Estelle and Alice Yorke were eager to share the trading expedition. Estelle wasevidently glad to postpone the ordeal of facing her art-editor.

In the great establishment where the Groundnut Hill sage cheese and quince jelly had found its market I received a most unexpectedly cordial welcome. The firm would give me a much larger order for the coming season, it would be glad to have other jellies and preserves of the Groundnut Hill brand; also cream cheeses, and butter in my tiny, clover-stamped pats.

I was paid for my last remittance of goods and I pocketed the delightful, little, rustling slip—the girls looking on—with an even keener thrill of pleasure than I had felt in taking it from the envelope in the Palmyra post-office. It was twice as large that was one reason, I had grown very mercenary. It was almost half enough to pay Dave's debt.

"I knew it was a sordid world, but I didn't think it was such a greedy one," said Octavia, as we went out of the shop. "In Palmyrawe don't think so much of good things to eat."

I had made bold to ask the man who was so polite to me about a possible chance to sell my sausages, and he gave me a letter to a firm in a great market. And down to the market we all trooped, Estelle with her large portfolio under her arm and a cloud of anxiety still upon her lovely face. I was light-hearted; never before had a check meant so much to me; and the others professed to think no scorn of sausages. Alice Yorke even regretted that Peggy Carruthers had not come, too; Peggy would have enjoyed it so much.

But I drew the line at Peggy Carruthers. She seemed too dainty and too like a society girl to condescend to the selling of farm products. Moreover, the feeling she had shown—perhaps not unreasonably—about Estelle's little flare-up, still rankled in my mind. Estelle had seemed scarcely to observe it; she was too much absorbed in her

troubles andher little will-o'-the-wisp of hope to have any thought for Peggy Carruthers.

They were only moderately civil at the first place in the market; they sent me around with my letter to several firms.

I think Octavia felt vaguely comforted, in spite of her sincere and hearty desire for my success, to find that sausages could be treated as badly as manuscripts!

But we at length found a firm that had heard of Groundnut Hill farm products and I immediately received an order for the sausages which I proposed to make. It was thought certain that something really "gilt-edged," with the Groundnut Hill brand upon it, would sell. The man, rosy and good-natured, a typical butcher, who represented the firm, suggested sausage cakes and hogs'-head-cheese—at which Octavia made a little move.

I assented eagerly. Leander Green had a cousin with "a talent for hogs'-head-cheese," as Leander had proudly boasted, a talent nowlying fallow in the horse-clipping business. I foresaw the building up of a great business and my heart leaped for joy.

"Palmyra?" remarked the clerk, who took my address, in an aside to his superior. "Isn't that where one of the designs came from for the old man's yacht? Some o' them shipbuildin' towns."

The others had wandered off to look at the beautiful display of vegetables and fruit in another part of the market. I listened with my heart in my mouth.

"A drawing?" I faltered, interrogatively.

"Old Mr. Salter—Solomon Salter—that owns a good part of the market, he's building himself a yacht, and none of the designs that the big fellows made appeared to suit him. He's a man that's got ideas of his own about most things. So he advertised for a design. Seems he got one from somewheres down your way. I don't know much about it; he told Pollard something about it. Pollard,he's been a sailor and calculates he knows all about navigation."

"Are you sure that it was from Palmyra?" I asked nervously, addressing myself to the clerk.

Pollard was not by any means sure; he repeated vaguely that it was "one o' them shipbuildin' towns." It was 'long in the winter that the old man told him about it; he had a stack of drawin's as high as the Old South meetin' house steeple. There seemed to be consid'able many folks drawin' pictures of one kind and another nowadays; he expected a good many done it to get rid of stiddy day's works. When you come to think that only one of the fellers that made them drawin's was goin' to get the designin' of the old man's yacht the designin' business didn't look very encouragin'. He happened to notice Palmyra—yes, it was Palmyra—because a nephew of his run his schooner ashore there once. But the old man was liberal;he'd pay—he'd pay when he did get what suited him and he could afford to.

The clerk was talkative but his information was not definite. I hurried after the others, trying to dismiss from my mind the idea that had seized upon it when the man said that a design had come from Palmyra. But it was so evident to me that I shouldn't succeed in forgetting it that I turned back and asked him where Mr. Solomon Salter might be found. It was bold, but I felt that I had now the dignity of a business woman to support me.

The yacht owner had an office on State Street; he gave me explicit directions where to find it.

Estelle's dreaded art-editor was a pleasant-faced woman, with a keen glance. She was reinforced by a very bushy-haired man with a "diminishing glass," which he used to see how the drawings would "come down." It took me some time to understand that he meant to see how they would look when reproduced for book illustrations.

She discovered all the good points in the drawings and he all the bad ones. Doubtless they each served a purpose in the welfare of the magazine, but when I saw the flush on Estelle's face grow hotter and hotter I wanted to do something mean and revengeful to him.

Yet he was the one, after all, who suggested that Estelle should "submit" a design for the new cover that the magazine was to have. He agreed at last, without cavil, to his associate's assertion that Estelle's bunchy babies were original and altogether charming, and he produced the manuscript of a jingle and a story and asked her to try her hand at illustrating them. If the illustrations were satisfactory a price which he named would be paid for them.

Now the price was not at all in proportion to the price of sage cheese and sausages, but it sounded large to Estelle, who had been having forced upon her the conviction that they were worthless. She looked breathlesslydelighted, as if she had stumbled upon a gold mine, and I felt my business bump expand.

"It seems a small price," I said stiffly, "but I suppose if she is successful she will be paid more for the next drawings."

"We have many young artists who are ready to work for less," said the lady editor in a firm, but gentle voice.

Out in the narrow passageway Alice Yorke and I both hugged Estelle, by way of congratulation. Octavia was too dignified for such demonstrations but her eyes were full of tears.

"It is only for names that great prices are paid," I said sagely. "It was only those who had heard of Groundnut Hill farm products who would have my sausages."

"I am not sorry, Bathsheba, that you said the price wasn't enough. I think it is too small," said Estelle.

And I was quite thrilled by the idea that my experience would have a new use; Estellewould certainly need a business manager.

We planned to go back to Palmyra, Alice Yorke and all, by boat at five o'clock that afternoon; and we were all fairly light-hearted, except Octavia, who had left her child to the inquisitors.

She asked me, as we walked along the street, if I did not think she could help Leander Green's cousin with the hogs'-head-cheese. We had all been invited to luncheon at Peggy Carruthers but had decided to decline the invitation. Octavia and I could not get over the sense of strained relations with the young man who had treated Dave so badly. And Estelle said openly that she never could bear to see him again till the money was paid. We went back to our boarding-place, and after luncheon, while the others were resting and making ready for the journey, I slipped out again.

I felt that I could not go home without knowing whether some one had sent a designfrom Palmyra for Mr. Solomon Salter's yacht, and, if so, with what success the design had met. I had a wild idea that I might be able to carry some good news to Dave—Dave, whose patient endurance of the daily grind of uncongenial labor was beginning to seem to me nothing less than heroic, whether he regarded it as a punishment or not.

Only a few rods from our door I met Ned Carruthers. He had a thin package in his hand which he waved triumphantly.

"You can't refuse to let me in with this!" he cried, in his boyish way. "It's a drawing that was left in my sister's studio. She sent me with it. I—I think it's your sister's."

He said this with a blush and a stammer as if it were not a matter of course that it was Estelle's. But perhaps it was natural that he should be a little embarrassed about the young woman who had treated him to such extremely plain speaking. I hesitated, knowing that it would trouble Estelle to see him.I didn't want her delight in her hard-won opportunity to be spoiled by any annoyance.

And then, suddenly, a brilliantly business-like idea seized me—at least I felt on the instant that it was such. I shrank from going to see Solomon Salter myself. Although, as I have said, Palmyran conventionalities were different from those of the city, yet I felt that it was not quite proper for a young woman to seek a strange man's business office on an errand of such purely personal interest that it might seem to savor of impertinence.

"Do you know Mr. Solomon Salter?" I demanded, eagerly.

"I know him, of course, every one does. He's an inordinately rich old fellow—I beg your pardon—a man of great wealth, and he happens to be a trustee of the estate to which Peggy and I are heirs."

"Would you—will you do me the very great favor of going to his office and askinghim a question for me? I'll give the drawing to my sister."

His face fell. But he gathered himself together and said politely that he was quite at my service.

“I want to know whether he has had a design for a yacht sent to him from Palmyra; and, oh, I so much want to know whether if he has, it’s the one he’s going to accept!”

His face kindled sympathetically. “He—he draws, too! I understand,” he said. “You must know how glad I shall be if I can be of any service,” he added, heartily. “I’ll find out everything I can; but I warn you that Mr. Solomon Salter is called a dreadful old curmudgeon.”

He was so eager and so boyish that I could have defied any one to help liking him at that moment, even remembering how meanly he had behaved toward Dave. He seemed, however, to have a real desire to make amends to Dave—or to Dave’s sister.

The afternoon slipped away and he didn’treturn to give an account of his interview with Mr. Solomon Salter. I had not told Octavia or Estelle, partly because I felt that my fancy that it was Dave who had sent the design had very slight foundation, partly because I feared they would strongly disapprove of my asking a favor of Ned Carruthers—as, indeed, I was inclined to do myself now that I had time for reflection.

We were on board the steamer; the shrill whistles had sounded and the bell had rung that was its signal for departure. We were about to slip away from the great, strange, homesick city, with its bull of Bashan roar; the beautiful blue ocean that stretched almost to our dear Palmyran shores invited us. But I hung regretfully over the railing and hoped against hope.

There he was! He had boasted of his sprinting, perhaps that exercise had something to do with the headlong rush with which he came down the wharf dashing aside porters and cabmen!

“It’s Ned Carruthers!” exclaimed Alice Yorke. “And how he looks! He’s all covered with dust.”

His foot was on the gangplank as the porter started to move it.

“A stack of them, six feet high!” he gasped—not quite as high as the Old South meeting house steeple! “He let me look through them and I found it, a capital design! I told him so. He said—— Here! wait a minute!” he shouted, suddenly, to the porter, and I, straining my ears, was forced to wait. “Allow me to assist you!” I saw him lift his hat; there was a tone of recognition in his voice.

It was a tall, awkward figure, in a cashmere shawl and carrying an ancient carpet-bag, that he helped upon the hastily restored gangplank even as the steamer’s wheels were ready to turn.

“If ever I’m ketched so far from home ag’in!” murmured Loveday, as she set her foot upon the steamer.

CHAPTER XI
A DIPLOMATIC EFFORT

LOVEDAY retired at once, with a lemon, although the harbor was as smooth as a mill-pond. She was not in the mood for confidences and vouchsafed only the pessimistic declarations that she was "an old idiot," and that "in this world folks wa'n't generally no better'n they pretended to be, and 'twas foolish to try to wind a gauze round 'em."

Loveday was human and homesick, and her honest old heart ached, I knew, with disappointment. She was very tired, too, having thriftily walked to the steamboat wharf and missed her way several times. So I was forced to forgive her for arriving just in time to interrupt young Carruthers, as he was telling me about Dave's design. That it wasDave's design I had no doubt from the young man's manner. Dear Dave! whatever he had done no one could say that he was not bringing forth works meet for repentance now.

It was tantalizing not to know what Mr. Solomon Salter had said about the design. Perhaps Ned Carruthers would write and tell me; he had certainly shown himself very friendly. He was covered with dust from head to foot; people had stared at him on the wharf, a young man in such fashionable attire and so unkempt. It was presumably the result of his search through the "stack" of designs. Drawings were consigned, it seemed, to the same prolonged and dusty oblivion as manuscripts.

Perhaps this friendly act might be regarded as a work meet for repentance on Ned Carruthers' part. Certainly, my heart warmed toward the young man.

I kept Dave's secret. When he succeeded would be time enough to have it known.When he succeeded, I said to myself, with perfect confidence, even with a vision before my eyes of the great dusty stack of drawings. I thought I had caught a glimpse of how things worked together. As for Dave's wrong-doing—I was not "winding a gauze" around it, but I realized that in God's blessed providence one may sin and yet repent.

When we landed in the forenoon at the pier on our own pretty river, I went, traveling-bag and travel-stains and all, to the shipyard.

Dave was not there. Rob was very ill again; he had had a bad night, and Dave had spent it with him, Cyrus told me, with a weary frown on his face.

"I suppose Dave ought to be at his work," I said, tentatively, not feeling quite sure what the frown meant, but observing, suddenly, that Cyrus had grown old and care-worn.

"There is not much work to do," saidCyrus, with a sharp accent. "There is no fear that Dave will not do his share. But I think he allows Rob to impose upon him. There is a nurse to take the proper care, and Dave ought not to be robbed of his rest, night after night. Invalidism makes some people very selfish. I can see that Rob's exactions weigh heavily on Dave."

This tone of sympathetic interest in Dave was new for Cyrus. A sort of hard patience was the kindest tone he had taken with him, in my hearing, since his expulsion from college.

"Is Rob worse?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered. "He suffers, poor fellow, and the suffering is wearing on his nervous system. The doctor says he mustn't be crossed and they can't do anything with him—no one but his father, at least. Rob is always afraid of him. His suffering is wearing on Dave, too, and that seems unnecessary. He manifests the most self-sacrificing devotion toward Rob."

"Cy, sometimes I can't believe that Dave was so bad," I said, impulsively. "Would he have left Rob when he was so ill?"

"Oh, he did that, of course," said Cyrus, with an impatient sigh. "The betting instinct carries everything before it. But he has behaved nobly here—nobly. There's no denying that. His steady industry has had an effect on the men." Cyrus spoke so heartily that I was tempted to reveal the secret; but I refrained, it was such a small secret and might only end in disappointment.

"Cyrus, of course he mustn't do such work as this for long," I said, obeying a sudden impulse. Cyrus looked at me, narrowing his near-sighted eyes.

"He isn't likely to have it to do," he said, slowly. And then he arose and shut the counting-room door, which I had left ajar and stood by the little cylinder stove, as if he were cold, although the April air was mild.

"After all, Bathsheba, I am forced to give it up," he said. And if he had been anybody but Cyrus, I should have said there was a sob in his throat.

"Give what up?" I asked, stupidly. And it occurred to me that I had never seen him look so long and "gawky" as he did standing there dejectedly, hanging his fine head—it was a fine head!

"Haven't you seen?" he said, patiently, although with a trace of suppressed irritability in his tone. "I have proved that I have not a talent for business. It has all gone to the bad. The prospects are so poor that the creditors cannot be induced to give us an extension of time. We shall be sold out under the hammer before very long."

"Cyrus, don't feel so!" I cried, for there was a white line around his mouth—in our family we all show that when we suffer intensely. "It isn't—no one can say that it is your fault!"

"No, only my incapacity," said Cyrus, bitterly.

"And the dull times," I added, quickly.

"I think the finger of Providence pointed me clearly to the vocation that I was adapted to. I think I was called, as Loveday would say, and I hadn't sufficient courage and faith to obey the call. I thought I must trust in myself. My heart has never been in this work, and only where your heart is will your real success be," said Cyrus, reflectively.

“One cannot be sure always which way the finger of Providence points,” I retorted. “You meant to do your duty.”

“Did I?” said Cyrus. “I felt like a machine that goes because it must. Sometimes there seemed to be scarcely anything about me that wasn’t mechanical, except the bitterness.”

“But it will all work together for good! You will see!” I cried, eagerly. “You will be a minister yet!”

“Give to God’s service what has been afailure in man’s!” said Cyrus, with a keenness of self-contempt that I felt to be exaggerated—after Cy’s old fashion.

“You have been serving God, don’t you know you have?” I insisted. “And you have grown, too! You are broader and better and more sympathetic than you ever were before! You will be a better minister because you have been a shipbuilder and failed. And you need not think any longer of us.” And I poured out my tale of practical success, and Estelle’s gleam of promise, although I had wished her to tell that herself. I said nothing about “Evelyn Marchmont,” that seemed a doubtful prospect; moreover, I knew that Octavia would never forgive me.

Cyrus seemed very much surprised. I remarked, triumphantly, that he couldn’t possibly call the production of hogs’-head-cheese a lady-like accomplishment, and he assented gravely. And he looked with respect at the check which I produced from my pocket-book. There is nothing queerer than theway in which a man of the old-fashioned, protecting sort looks at the earnings of his women-kind. But he seemed more astonished that Estelle had a commission to make illustrations. He said that he had no idea that she could do anything that was worth paying for.

“But, after all, Bathsheba, the real bitterness is in the thought of what grandfather would have felt to have his business go out of the family! In the thought that I could not hold on to what ought to be, what will be some time, in the right hands, so valuable.”

I said all I could to comfort him and he rewarded me by a great compliment—drawn forth, I knew, not so much by the comforting words as by the hogs’-head-cheese:

“If only you had been a boy, Bathsheba!”

“There is Dave,” I ventured. “Is there nothing that he can do about it?”

“At his age, with his past record, what could he possibly do?” said Cyrus.

And I left him and climbed our lovely orchard slope, with the greening grass under my feet and a bluebird singing on the pear-tree, and felt that life was a burden almost too heavy to bear.

I found, when I reached the house, that Dave was in his room, asleep.

“He’s all beat out, he hain’t no more pertness than a draggled rooster,” said Loveday, who was already rustling cheerfully around in a brand new calico dress and bringing to light Viola’s hidden misdeeds. “I don’t see but what I shall have to make

spring bitters before I set my soft soap b'ilin', though it always did 'pear to me shif'less not to get soft soap out of the way before bitters come on."

Loveday's spirits had risen; she was thoroughly happy to be at home. "If there's anything that folks had ought to be thankful for it's to be under their own vine and fig-tree, especially after they have resked the perils and temptations of the city. I never slep' hardly a wink whilst I was there, MissBathsheba, not hardly a wink, a-thinkin' of Sodom and Gomorrah. 'N' then I couldn't help thinkin' that if everything was blowed up there wa'n't no way for folks to know me. I had forgot my nightcap and Aunt Lois had lent me one that belonged to her niece that moved out west, and was marked Nancy Turner. I kep' a-picturin' that I was buried in one of them crowded graveyards, with a stone a-top of me marked Nancy Turner! Of course I knew, Miss Bathsheba, that it wouldn't make a mite of difference"—Loveday's voice grew suddenly grave and sweet—"I knew the Lord's resurrection angel would find me anywheres, but, you see, if you've always lived respectable and with folks knowin' who you be, why you do want to die so!"

I went over to see Rob, before Dave had wakened. I had never seen him look so ill. There were deep hollows around his eyes and one could trace the blue veins in his high forehead. He extended a painfully thin armfrom the loose sleeve of his dressing-gown—a boy's arm is always so pathetic when it is wasted. He gave me his hand in a half-reluctant way and scowled at me, resenting, as I afterwards found, the fact that I was the wrong one.

"Where is Dave? I thought it was Dave when I heard some one at the door. Dave stays away so long!" he said, peevishly. "And I worry so that it makes me ill. And then, when he comes, he is not satisfactory—not nowadays."

"Dave works hard and is very tired," I said, in a reproving tone. "You ought to depend more upon your nurse."

"Nurse! What good does she do me?" he exclaimed, fretfully. "I wish you would go away! Won't you, please?" he added, plaintively to the nurse—Sally Tibbetts, from the back road, whom Dr. Yorke had tried to teach some of the duties of a trained nurse. And Sally Tibbetts, after glancing at me with a warning finger on her lip, left the room.

"Well, if she's gone, it's a wonder!" said Rob, in a tone of petulant satisfaction. "She hangs round here so I can't get a chance to speak to Dave. He doesn't want me to speak to him, either. He behaves very queerly. There is some mystery."

"That's just what I've been thinking for a good while, Rob," I said, and I looked steadfastly at him.

He started up from his pillows and looked at me and his wistful eyes dilated.

"I don't know what you mean, if it's anything about me," he said quickly. "I meant something that—that's happened lately; something that Dave and I know about, and I don't think he tells me all about it."

I had preserved an unmoved countenance and disarmed some apparent suspicions that I had aroused in him and he sank back, with a sigh, and returned to his grievance against Dave.

"They don't let him talk to me because it agitates me, they say—as if it didn't hurt memore to worry and worry about things. And you know how Dave keeps things to himself. He takes advantage—I'm afraid he takes advantage of the fuss they make to keep something from me that he doesn't want me to know. I'm afraid something has happened to—to something that I'm very fond of. Dave ought to go and see, and he doesn't. It's very cruel of Dave when I'm this way and can't do anything about it myself."

"I think Dave does all he can for you," I replied, and it was not easy to keep my indignation out of my voice. "He is not in a very easy place himself. Of course, it is not strange that he is not in an easy place; but he brought it upon himself and you are not responsible for your illness. 'The way of the transgressor is hard,' but at the same time——"

"Dave a transgressor? Pooh!" he said, and then a sudden flush overspread his pale face. "You—you mean about his being expelled? I—I'd be ashamed to be his own sister and not know Dave any better than youdo!" He raised himself on one elbow and regarded me steadfastly, his eyes dark with scorn. "But you're not his own sister, are you? I wonder if Estelle knows any better. Such a silly lot as girls are, always ready to believe the worst of a fellow!"

"If Estelle knows any better than what?" I asked shrewdly.

"Oh, now you're pumping me, aren't you?" he flashed out. "A pretty way to treat a fellow who's as ill as I am—to come here and pretend to be so beautifully sympathetic just to get something out of me!"

I had learned, at least, that there was something to find out, and my heart thrilled with hope that Dave had after all never done those dreadful things of which he was accused. I leaned over Rob, and took one of his boyish, wasted, sharp-knuckled hands in mine.

"Rob, surely you wouldn't keep any secret for Dave that was costing him and all who love him so much?" I said earnestly. "Ifhe was wrongfully expelled from college, if he was innocent of the wrong-doing with which he was charged and you knew it, you couldn't be so wicked, so cruel as to keep silent?"

The color came and went on his sharp-featured, sensitive face and his breathing became stertorous. I was cruel, but I persisted—so much was at stake!

"I don't know what you come here tormenting me for!" he cried shrilly. "Dave manages his own affairs. Girls make such a fuss about everything. It was no great harm to be expelled from that little six-penny college—the old dolts, they weren't fit to untie Dave's shoes, not one of them! Wouldn't anybody with common sense know that Dave wasn't the sort of fellow to——"

There was a shout from the lawn; it was only Uncle Horace calling out sharply to his horse as he mounted him, but Rob caught himself up with a terrified gasp.

"I wish you'd go away! You've treatedDave badly enough and now you come here and try to kill me! You needn't think I would tell you anything if I could. Dave will be a great man yet, I'll tell you that, in spite of those old college ninnies, and in spite of you who have treated him as if he were an outlaw. And I—I should be treated worse; he didn't have anybody like father! Dave said he didn't"—this came eagerly—"he said he could very well stand the blame and live it down. That's what he said—live it down. But you go away!" The boy was positively fierce now. "You make me say things that I don't mean to. I haven't slept at all, scarcely at all for five nights, and you know I'm weak and you take advantage of it. Dave—even Dave takes advantage of it!" The boy burst into a passion of tears. "He won't tell me something that I want to know; he puts me off. There's something that he ought to have seen to and he hasn't done it! I'm worried almost out of my mind. You—you think a lot of your old dogGyp. What would you do if cruel things were happening to Gyp?"

I sat like a statue and listened. A ray of light seemed about to break upon me, but it was elusive.

"I can't get at Dave because that nurse is always here and her ears are as long as from here to the river! She won't stay away like this when he's here. You tell Dave that I want him to see to things and let me know how they are! Tell him I shall die if he doesn't. There's—there's money that I'm afraid hasn't been paid. Nobody knows what would happen if the money wasn't paid."

"Do—do you mean the money that Dave borrowed?" I stammered stupidly.

"Who cares about the money that Dave borrowed from that rich fellow? Let him wait for it! He's a sneak anyhow."

"I don't think you quite understand him," I ventured, but my small protest fell unheeded.

"Girls fret themself about such smallthings," continued Rob scornfully. "But they have no feeling for living things that suffer. Was it you or Estelle, who wanted me to shoot a blue jay to trim a hat? Of course a fellow pays his debts, but that isn't all that he's called upon to do."

I denied the blue jay vehemently, for both Estelle and myself. I declared that none of us had ever been guilty of wearing so much as the wing of a bird upon a hat. But Rob knew that it was "some girl," and it was "just like all of them."

"And when your old Gyp had pneumonia you let Hiram Nute doctor him, instead of sending to the Port, for the vet." That was Rob's next fiercely uttered accusation.

"But Hiram is better than any veterinary surgeon that every lived!" I cried. "We were so thankful that he was at home."

“He has ‘a tarlent for combernations,’” quoted Rob, with a little gleam of humor, although his voice was like a growl, “but I wouldn’t trust him with a sick sparrow.But there are such a lot of people who haven’t any feeling for animals!”

“You can’t accuse us of that,” I said with some heat. “We sat up nights with Gyp, and he got well.”

“God made them tough; he knew how people were going to treat them,” said Rob sharply.

I so far sympathized with him as to almost forget that I was trying to discover the secret that was ruining Dave’s life.

“I know you always were kind to animals, Rob,” I said heartily. “You never wanted to kill the forest things or catch them in traps, like other boys.”

“Dave didn’t either—though he always would go fishing,” said Rob reflectively. “I don’t suppose Dave would neglect anything—any animal when he ought to see that it was well-treated, do you?” he asked wistfully.

“I am sure he wouldn’t,” I answered heartily.

“But he behaves queerly, all the same,” repeated Rob, with his anxious frown deepened.

“Why don’t you tell me all about it, Rob? Perhaps I could influence him,” I said, with what I felt to be Machiavellian diplomacy.

But it was not successful.

“I don’t, because you’re a girl, and you’d begin to think things were your duty. Girls always kick up a fuss when they think things are their duty,” he said crisply. “But you may tell Dave that he ought to attend to things, and he’ll know what you mean. I haven’t any money. Father keeps me so short. I’m treated as if I were a baby. I’ve money in the bank that was my mother’s, but I can’t touch it until I’m of age.”

“If it’s a question of money, why Dave’s pockets are not overflowing,” I said a little sharply.

He struggled up and stared at me, and the hollows around his eyes seemed to grow deeper.

“I’m afraid that’s the trouble,” he half whispered hoarsely, for the nurse was at the door. “And, Bathsheba, I’m afraid something dreadful will happen. You—you can’t help thinking an awful lot of the first thing you ever owned, especially when it’s a colt——” He stopped short with a sudden sense that he was betraying himself, and sank back upon his pillows drawing his breath in gasps.

“You—go—away!” he cried fiercely. “I don’t want you here, prying and spying! You needn’t think you can find out anything by me, I’m far too sharp for you! And I don’t want your jelly or your pity any more than I do your prying. There’s only one nice thing about any of you girls, and that is that you are Dave’s sisters!

“But I’m—I’m afraid Dave has gone back on me! You tell him, Bathsheba, that he mustn’t.” His anxiety was again overbearing his resentment and prudence.

Poor boy! His nervous system was certainlyweakened, I thought, with a thrill of pity. And yet I did not relent in my purpose of discovering the secret that was injuring Dave.

"Tell him that he must—must get the money some way and go and see where it is!" he said imploringly.

I stood beside him and stroked his hair, my heart divided between real pity and my purpose.

"Where what is? Trust me, Rob!" I said. "Is it Alf Reeder's race-horse, Prince Charley?"

He started and his face turned pale. At that moment Uncle Horace opened the door. Rob had not heeded the nurse, who busied herself about the room, but at sight of his father the blood rushed in a flood to his face and his sensitive lips quivered as from a blow.

"I think you are staying too long, Bathsheba," said Uncle Horace anxiously. The boy in whom he inspired such fear was thevery pulse of his heart. "I don't think he had better see any one, he is so easily agitated."

The boy, indeed, shook now in all his slender frame as with a nervous chill, but he clung to my hand although his eyes were fixed on mine with a startled expression.

"It will be quite safe for me to know, Rob," I whispered. But he shut his lips tightly and shook his head.

"I really think you had better go, Bathsheba," said Uncle Horace insistently.

"You tell Dave I want him right away!" called Rob, as Uncle Horace opened the door for me. "Bathsheba, Bathsheba!" he called with what I thought was relenting in his tone. If I could go back I should be in full possession of the secret, and it would be a relief rather than a harm to tell me. But Uncle Horace firmly shut the door, and there was really no one in our family with courage enough to open a door that Uncle Horace had shut.

When I got outside of the house I heard Rob's voice raised shrilly, insistently. He evidently wished for something and his father was objecting. Finally, as I lingered the nurse opened the window a little wider than it had been open before.

"Bathsheba! Bathsheba!" cried Rob. "It is—what you said! Tell Dave to go and get him—get him quick or I shall die!"

The boy was certainly desperate, for his father must have been within hearing. Alf Reeder's race-horse, Prince Charley! Little by little the secret pieced itself together, like patchwork, in my brain.

It was vague. I could not be sure. But I longed, with a longing that was like a prayer, as I ran homeward across the bridge, to find it true.

Dave had wakened and gone down to the shipyard when I reached home. I started off at once. I could not rest until I had seen Dave. Alice Yorke was there, having come in search of some of her belongings that hadbeen stored away in

Estelle's traveling-bag. Viola was ringing the dinner bell, and Estelle urged Alice to stay.

"No, no, don't stay! Come with me!" I urged, and fairly dragged her toward the shipyard. I fancied—well, we have many blind and foolish fancies, I don't quite know to this day whether this was a blind and foolish one or not—I fancied that it would do Dave good, to the marrow of his bones, to have Alice Yorke know that he had never merited the disgrace that had come upon him.

Before I rushed away I drew Estelle behind the hall door and hugged her. "Dave never did it!" I gasped rapturously.

"Is it possible that you have just found that out?" returned Estelle with cold dignity. But her eyes shone.

I was tempted to drag her also to the shipyard, but I feared that her chilling dignity might bolster up Dave in a determination not to reveal anything. I was taking AliceYorke with me to melt him and I fondly fancied myself a diplomat.

He was at work with his brawny arms bare; he did not even pull down his sleeves, he did not show even the slightest consciousness of his workman's dress as I had seen him do in Alice Yorke's presence. He went on wielding his axe as if he did not care to be interrupted and I began to feel myself a little at a loss.

Both the "aliens" had a certain personal dignity that almost amounted to aloofness, when they chose that it should, and made familiar intercourse difficult, even for their nearest of kin.

Then, suddenly, his white and worn looks went to my heart and, in the queer workings of human nature, made my indignation flame up.

"You had no right to do it, Dave!" I cried. "It was a cruel, a wicked deception. It hurt others as well as yourself. You had no right to sacrifice yourself to Rob, for therewere others to think of. You can't live to yourself in this world!"

A flush slowly overspread the face of my young giant. He glanced at Alice Yorke, then around at the workmen. Some of the latter were within hearing. They call me slow but I am too hasty when my temper is up.

"I am going to eat my dinner now," said Dave coolly; and he threw aside his axe and drew a basket out from under a pile of boards. He had been eating cold dinners, in true workingman fashion while Estelle was away. It occurred to me that she might come down with something hot for him now—and reinforce his reticence. I wished that I had been less impulsive and chosen a more opportune time. But now I would not retreat.

Dave stood irresolute, basket in hand.

"There's a pretty place on the river bank where I go to eat my dinner," he said. "Perhaps you would like to come; I alwayshave enough to share. I can't say that the doughnuts have been quite up to the mark since Loveday went away, but of course the sage cheese is always superlatively good," with a little bow in my direction, which did not offset the irritated look in his eyes.

While Alice and I hesitated, something very funny occurred. Cyrus appeared from the counting-house with a battered coffee-pot in his hand.

"He's been roasting himself to make that coffee for us; we have no fire in the vessel now," said Dave. "Come! there'll be enough for all!" His tone was cordial now, and we followed him toward the shore while Cyrus came along after us, carrying the battered old coffee-pot carefully and squinting wonderingly at us with his near-sighted eyes.

CHAPTER XII
A LUNCHEON WITH UNBIDDEN GUESTS

"NOW this is what I call delightful," said Cyrus, as he set the disreputable looking coffee-pot down upon the pile of boards, which was serving us both as a table and seats. He wiped his heated brow wearily. Impossible as it seemed, Cyrus had been roasting himself making Dave's coffee. The river flowed at our feet, blue, and softly singing, the April sun was caressingly soft and warm and the greening earth a fragrant joy.

"Can sorrow live with April days?" I murmured. But the lines of carking care had come back to Cyrus' face, as he seated himself on the pile near the projecting board which was serving Alice Yorke as a tilt—we all called them "tilters" in Palmyra.

"I think I won't go up to the house to dinner," he said. "I'm not hungry, and sinceyou are here, Bathsheba, there is no need. I was going only to give you this." And he calmly drew a telegram from his pocket. "They seemed to think at the office that a telegram meant business and must be sent to the counting-room."

Now telegrams addressed to Miss Bathsheba Dill might have been as thick as leaves in Vallambrosa for all the agitation Cyrus showed; but as for me, the blood rushed to my head and for an instant Alice Yorke, on her tilter seemed to be leading a race into the river.

I heard, as in a dream, Dave say, "Will you have some coffee, Miss Yorke?" and noted vaguely that he was just as gallant and graceful as if the cup were not old and cracked. And then, although my hands shook like a leaf, I was face to face with the first telegram of my life.

"The best design. I think a great thing. Salter will write your brother.

"E. CARRUTHERS."

My heart leaped for joy. The best design! A great thing! I wanted to shout it out to the four winds of heaven, but that provoking Dave had sat down beside Alice Yorke and they were making merry over their lunch. He had left the basket with another cracked cup and a tin can at our end of the pile, and the coffee-pot was set down midway, but so shakily that it seemed likely to tip off.

"Bathsheba, if you want some coffee you shall have my cup in a minute," he called to me. "I'll wash it in the river."

Cyrus made a feint of eating a little; it was easy to see that it was hard work. I wished that Dave would not monopolize Alice Yorke, in that boyish, ridiculous way, for I thought her brightness might make Cyrus forget his care.

Dear old Cyrus! The softness he had shown in making Dave's coffee had drawn me to him with a new tenderness; after all Cyrus was my own brother. He looked so forlorn, too, with his long, lank figure huddled awkwardlyupon the pile of

boards and making a pitiful attempt to assume the light-minded air appropriate to the occasion.

"Gay youth loves gay youth," I said to myself, but nevertheless I was irritated by Dave and Alice Yorke.

Cyrus had rather held aloof from Alice than otherwise since Dave had come home, and yet I thought his interest in her was different from that which he had ever shown in any other girl.

My feelings were rather queerly mingled. I had not been in the least successful in conveying to Dave my discovery of his innocence—or rather my belief, for it was not yet quite so much a discovery as I was forced to acknowledge to myself, and it did not seem an opportune time for imparting the good news of the telegram.

But I decided to share my delight with Cyrus; it might be cheering, in the midst of the business troubles, to know that Dave had had some success.

"A design?" repeated Cyrus dubiously, after I had explained all the circumstances of my discovery. "O dear, has he gone to drawing again? I hoped that was all over!" I don't think that Cyrus really understood so clearly as he might have done if Alice Yorke's soft voice, mingled with Dave's manly tones, had not come floating constantly to our ears.

"But it is a real triumph to have his design chosen from among so many!" I insisted. "And he will be paid for it—perhaps a great deal."

"I hope he will," said Cyrus, with a doubtful accent. "I hoped he might develop some business talent, but I'm afraid there is no chance of that. Probably he has been doing that sort of thing and giving his mind to it all the time. But he has behaved well!"

There was no grudging in Cyrus' tone; it was said heartily. He looked at his watch.

"I have some letters to write. I really ought to go back to the counting-room," hesaid, and gathered his long length up decidedly from the pile of boards. I was vexed with what I thought his stupidity and yet I longed to offer him a little comfort.

"Cyrus, he didn't do it! Dave didn't do that dreadful thing!" I whispered hoarsely. "I almost know the whole mystery."

Cyrus looked at me in an absent, bewildered way. "If he did do it, he is in a fair way to live it down," he replied. "Everything must be done to help him, everything!" There was an accent that seemed as if the man's whole soul were in it and his voice actually trembled. "But I wish he would give up that drawing."

Cyrus, despairing of his own business capacity, had been indulging in a stronger hope than he would own, or perhaps had even been conscious of, that Dave would develop something of the kind. Perhaps it was not to be expected that he should be elated as I was over the success of the design.

And, poor Cyrus! It was quite evidentthat he was struggling with jealousy whether he were aware of it or not. For a moment I was so angry with both these

young chits that I could scarcely bring myself to speak to them. And yet Cyrus ought to have known that one must woo one's sweetheart if he hopes to win her. But it seemed to me doubtful whether Cyrus would know how, while it was as natural to Dave to be gallant as to be stroke-oar in the college crew.

"That boy will always be pretty-spoken, whatever else he ain't," had been Loveday's dictum before he had reached a decade.

"Why, has Mr. Dill gone already!" exclaimed Alice Yorke with a pretty little start and a widening of her bright eyes.

"He hasn't time to spend in idleness and nonsense," I said so harshly that they both colored. I was ashamed of myself but I was not going to have Alice Yorke fancy that he had been vexed by her foolish trifling.

I caught sight of a glimmer of Estelle's light blue dress, among the orchard trees and Iwent to meet her. There had been Dave's favorite pudding for dessert and she was bringing him some of it.

"Well, was Dave delighted to know that you had discovered that he wasn't a sneak after all?" she said sarcastically. These things had worn on Estelle; that was undeniable.

"He—he wouldn't listen to me," I faltered, meekly. "And, Estelle, I don't dare to show him this! I'm afraid he will think I was meddling." And I poured into her ears all the little tale of the design.

"Ned Carruthers! It wouldn't be strange if Dave thought you were meddling," she exclaimed, even while her eyes shone with pride and delight. "I don't know how you could talk to him about it, Bathsheba! It's the hardest of anything to forgive people for having been mean."

"He thought Dave was a hypocrite; he had his provocations," I retorted. "And it was well that I could forgive him sufficiently to talk to him about the design since he is reallyrepentant and anxious to do all that he can for Dave, and he is in a position to have influence with Mr. Salter."

"Dave doesn't need influence; his drawings can stand on their own merits," she answered obstinately. But I felt sure that she was trying to maintain a righteous indignation against young Carruthers and that she really knew that sufficient outside influence to secure the prompt examination of one's work is not a bad thing. And then she suddenly drew a long, deep breath.

"O, I'm so glad, so glad!" she cried. "You don't know what it has been to me to have Dave in the shipyard!"

"It has been a good thing," I said stoutly. "It has been good discipline for Dave, and it has opened Cyrus' eyes to what was fine in him. He said to me to-day that Dave had done well, that there was good stuff in him."

Estelle was pleased, although she was too proud to show it.

"Opened your eyes, too!" she said crisply."You were almost as hard upon him as Cyrus." As I have remarked before, we are a plain-spoken family.

Dave seized upon his pudding like a boy, insisting upon dividing it with Alice Yorke and giving her the lion's share of the frosting. No one would have thought, seeing how light-hearted he was, that he was living down a deep disgrace and that the shipyard was to be sold at auction for the benefit of creditors the next month. Alice Yorke was so gay that I thought my hasty whisper to her of "Dave didn't do it" had taken a load from her heart.

I will never think I know anything about a girl's heart again!

Estelle was merry, as I had not seen her for a long time, and that was not strange since her heart was so bound up in Dave. I knew she was eager to ask me what I knew about Dave's trouble and how I had discovered it but her pride would not let her.

In the midst of the hilarity Estelle uttereda cry of dismay and I, following her gaze, saw a startling white face appearing above the edge of the wood-pile behind us. It vanished so suddenly that if it had not been for Estelle's cry I should almost have thought myself the victim of a disordered imagination.

"Rob?" I cried. "It can't be Rob!"

"It was Rob's face," said Estelle, with white lips—for not since his return from school had Rob been able to leave his room.

Dave strode around the wood-pile and drew forth a shrinking figure, so white-faced and at the same time so grotesque that we scarcely knew whether to laugh or to cry at sight of it.

Rob had thrown over his flannel dressing-gown the silk crazy-quilt, Marcella's pride, from his bed. It was drawn partly over his head and the gay colors made his pallor ghastly.

Dave tore off the quilt and tossed it up on the wood-pile, and in a moment had thrust his own rough jacket upon Rob. It wasscarcely less grotesque a garment for him than the quilt, it was so much too large, but was certainly warmer—and the wind from the river was cool although the sun was warm. Dave took off his own cap, also, and put it upon Rob's head and we all laughed a little in spite of our fright, when it came down nearly to his ears.

"I came to find Bathsheba," he said as Dave scolded him, as gently as his mother might have done. "She—she knows, Dave!" His voice was a husky whisper and he trembled in every limb. "I didn't think how dangerous it was, at first. She'll think it her duty to tell, girls always think it's their duty to do disagreeable things! And if father should find out——! You make her promise not to tell a soul, Dave!"

Dave had drawn him down into a sheltered nook in the great pile of boards and spread the quilt over him. He supplemented it by a sheltering arm, regardless of his coatless and hatless condition.

"You must rest a little while and then we'll get you home," he said anxiously. "Never mind Bathsheba! I'll fix Bathsheba!" he added lightly.

But the boy was too thoroughly alarmed to be put off in that way.

“Make her promise solemnly!—you know I couldn’t stand father. It would kill me! And they’ll be after me in just a minute. I got away while the nurse was at dinner. I climbed down the woodbine trellis. It didn’t make me breathe half so badly as she did”—indicating me by a resentful little jerk of the head. “She came and talked and talked. I thought at first that she was only bothering, like a girl; then I thought she was trying to find out things; at last she let out that she knew!”

Dave looked at me steadily. I had not known until that moment how hurt he had been.

“At first I thought only of the horse,” Rob continued in his weak, querulous voice.“You haven’t done as you ought about old Lucifer, Dave!”

Old Lucifer! That was the horse that Uncle Horace had sold, four or five years before because, as he said, Rob was making a sentimental fuss over him. Rob had grieved so that he had brought on a fit of illness.

“That fellow will get him on to the race-course again! There are such brutes in the world! You wouldn’t believe ’twas old Lucifer when I showed you the picture on the fence. You wouldn’t have gone to the race if I hadn’t run away when I was so ill that you had to follow me. You see if Bathsheba should tell father of all that I did then—writing his name on the check and all——”

“That’s all right you know, Rob, she won’t tell!” interrupted Dave hastily. “No one shall know.”

I looked at Alice Yorke; she stood a little aside, near the river bank. Rob did not seem to observe that she was within hearing; there seemed to me a danger that what with histerror of his father and his anxiety about his old horse his mind would become permanently weakened.

As for me I felt as if the very boards had ears, instead of feeling exultant at the revelation that was proving Dave’s innocence of all the evil of which he had been accused. I had that strange sense that comes to us all sometimes that there is some one near, although invisible. I looked about me. There were many piles of boards behind which a listener might lurk; there was a clump of alders near us tall enough and thick enough to conceal an eavesdropper.

But of course it was only a nervous fancy that any one was near, so I said to myself impatiently, the next moment. I feared that my mind was growing weak like Rob’s—which would never do for a practical business woman.

“We paid Alf Reeder too much for the horse, anyway; he showed he was a cheat and then it was dangerous to let him boardhim, if he did say he knew just how to take care of him. Do you remember how he stumbled and fell? And how they spurred him till there was blood on his flanks? If they had made him try it once more it would have killed him! They thought so, too, or they wouldn’t have sold him. But how they made you pay! Now that you don’t hear from him I expect they’re racing him again. When my breathing gets easier so that I drop asleep I start up again thinking I see

Lucifer straining his muscles and bleeding from the spur, as he was that day, and with that human agonized look that there was in his eyes when he turned them toward us!"

"You mustn't think of it," said Dave earnestly. "You'll never get well while you keep brooding over it. And the horse isn't racing now; he is taken good care of. The money has been paid regularly for his board—you couldn't think that I would neglect that?"

I pricked up my ears. How had he paidit? I could not think how he could have come by even so small an amount of money as a horse's board would cost.

Suddenly I met Estelle's eyes and I knew. The old berry savings in the tin bank that were to have sent Cyrus to college had grown undisturbed; they had been added to by grandma, from time to time, as an encouragement to the childish thrift and industry. I remembered when they had been transferred from the red tin apple to the Palmyra bank, and remembered Estelle's proud boast that there were more than forty dollars. The interest would have added a little to it in the years that had passed since then.

I was unconscious that there was a sudden questioning in my eyes until Estelle answered it.

"No, I never was told how things were until to-day," she said. "I would have scorned to be. I know Dave!"

Now of course reason was not altogether upon her side, and yet as she looked straightat me with those clear uncompromising blue eyes of hers, I hung my head.

"Now, you bear up, Rob, old fellow!" Dave counseled with an affectation of lightness—I knew that it was an affectation by the anxious little frown between his eyes. "We must get you home or we shall have your father down upon us."

Rob looked about him uneasily. "No, he has gone out to the back pastures and from there he was going to ride up to Penfield. He won't be home until night. And that fat nurse eats a lot and gossips with Marcella. It makes me feel better to be here. I wish I could get well enough to go with you, Dave, when you go after Lucifer. If it would only be safe to bring him home. But it won't, you know; ten years wouldn't change Lucifer so father wouldn't know him. But you will get him boarded in a good place, won't you, Dave? and so near that we can go to see him!"

Dave's teeth were set tightly together, his face was turned away from Rob.

"I'll do just the best I can, Rob, and soon now, I hope!" he said in a cheerful tone. "But if you are going to pick up so you can go with me, it won't do for you to take such excursions as this!"

"You put me off about the horse; there's something you don't tell me!" cried Rob querulously. "People think it's all right to cheat me; and then they spy upon me and try to make me tell them things, as Bathsheba did. Why did she want to make me tell her, when she knew already? I suppose she wanted to tell father that I had owned up. If he should know, Dave, that you had borne all the blame for me—why I think it would kill him! He is so proud; he is ashamed of my being a weakling, as he calls it!

And just the way he would look at me would kill me! That girl that's listening won't tell, will she?"

He seemed suddenly aware of Alice Yorke's presence and to realize that he was revealing more than was prudent.

"No, she won't tell; I am sure I can answer for that," said Dave gravely. "No one will tell." And looking over Rob's head Dave made a solemn, mournful sign to Estelle and me. It meant that Rob would not live long; we must humor him at whatever cost. Now inwardly I rebelled. I thought there had been too much yielding to Rob's whims already; that Dave's had been a foolish martyrdom. It was natural that a strong and healthy young man like Dave should think Rob was upon the verge of the grave; I knew that puny people sometimes live long. And I thought it quite time that Dave's costly sacrifice should come to an end.

Was the only difference to be that Estelle should have added sight to her faith, and that I, whereas I had been blind, should see? I wished to tell as well as know.

My heart burned within me. In spite of Rob's weakness I should have blazed forth my opinion of his selfishness, if Dave had notlaid a restraining hand upon me. He drew me a little aside.

"It's no use now, Bathsheba, don't you see?" he said. "I shouldn't have promised to keep silent about it, if Uncle Horace had not been just what he is and Rob in such terror of him. It's constitutional with Rob, you know. Uncle Horace's wife was afraid of him in the year before she died. No one can help pitying the poor boy."

There was a noise behind the boards that startled me.

"You are afraid of your shadow! Those loose boards are light and the wind rattles them," said Dave carelessly. "As I was saying I had to do just what I did—pay the money and get the check back on which Rob had forged his father's name, and let the college authorities think that I had lost the money in betting. I couldn't say, could I, that I had only followed Rob to Newmarket when he got off a sick-bed and made his way there somehow, because a picture of one ofthe race-horses which he saw by accident had made him sure that it was his old Lucifer;—the boy's love for animals is almost morbid. Yes, perhaps I ought to have said so, Bathsheba; there were others to be thought of besides Rob or myself. But I gave him my promise hastily. I didn't foresee the expulsion from college and all the consequences. When Rob found what a serious matter it was, he became wild with terror lest his father should find out."

"We that are strong should bear the burdens of the weak, but we shouldn't help them to be selfish," I said sententiously.

"But Rob is so very weak! He's different from other people. If his father had only realized that and made allowances for it."

"But, now," I said, "surely there's no need of keeping on with the stupid deceit." For I was too angry to give any fine names to the foolish business.

“But, now, do you know, I’ve come to rather like the martyrdom?” said Dave, withactually a twinkle in his eye. “I’ve learned in it more than I could have learned in college! ‘There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,’ you know!”

“God’s providence is mine inheritance,” flashed into my mind, but I would not say it lest I should encourage the boy in folly.

“I have been practising at something besides ship-carpentering, although that isn’t such a bad thing for a fellow with muscle to earn his living by! And I have some chance, perhaps only a slight one, of making a success of it.”

How that telegram burned in my pocket when I saw the wistful eagerness, mingled with doubt, in his eyes!

But I kept it in my pocket and held my peace. Being a sister to a boy is a matter that requires diplomacy!

“And I’m living it down,” continued Dave, not without a touch of pride in his voice. “Cyrus has confidence in me already. Even Uncle Horace has asked my opinion ofseveral matters connected with these business troubles. Promise me, Bathsheba, that you’ll keep quiet and let me live it down.”

“I can’t bear that they shouldn’t know it. Uncle Horace and Cyrus, especially Uncle Horace; he was so perfectly sardonic that Thanksgiving day!”

The wind seemed to be rising; those boards rattled so.

“Wait, for my sake, if not for poor Rob’s,” he insisted. “‘The mills of the gods grind slowly,’” he added lightly.

“‘The mills of God,’” I amended.

“‘Though the mills of God grind slowly
Yet they grind exceeding small,
Though with patience He stands waiting
With exactness grinds He all.’”

I murmured the words, as Dave hurried back to Rob, fearing that he would take cold in the fresh wind. They were beautifully true words, I know, and yet I felt wicked enough at that moment to long to help a little in the grinding of Uncle Horace!

I loitered, reflecting, on the way back tothe others. With a vague recollection of the feeling I had had that some one was near I turned around. The great unfinished vessel, some of its ribs still bare, so slowly had the work progressed of late, loomed large between the blue of the river and the blue of the sky.

Stepping from the shadow of a great heap of sawdust a tall, gaunt figure was visible for a moment, then was lost to sight behind the vessel’s stern. To the back pastures his father had gone, Rob said, and he was going thence to Penfield; but was there another figure in the world that could be mistaken for Uncle Horace’s?

I stepped back to the rattling boards. There were huge tracks behind them, that went zigzagging away as if their maker had moved stealthily behind one pile of boards and then another. From the ground I picked up a dog-skin driving-glove—a

very large one. Had I, all unwittingly, assisted vigorously at the grinding of Uncle Horace?

CHAPTER XIII
LOVEDAY MAKES A SURPRISING ANNOUNCEMENT

DAVE had espied Dennis, Uncle Horace's man, driving post-haste across the bridge and was whistling and waving frantically to attract his attention when I returned to the lunching place. He had found another coat to wrap Rob in, but the boy was shivering. Dennis drove into the yard and over piles of chips and heaps of sawdust, down to the river-brink where we were. His relief was plainly visible when he saw Rob.

"We'd be kilt intoirely, if the masther came home and found him gorn," said Dennis with deep feeling. "Sure it's on the bank o' the river for miles I'm after seekin' and it's for thraggin' it the women do be!"

"Dennis, where is Mr. Partridge?" I asked.

"Shure it's till the back pastures he do be gorn, and Penfield afther," said Dennis. And although I had too well-regulated a Yankee mind to believe in ghosts it gave me a queer feeling to think of that gaunt, stealthy figure that I had seen making its way out of the shipyard. It had not appeared afterward upon our orchard slope, the "short cut" to the highway, for I had watched to see.

Rob would not be satisfied unless Dave drove him home. He leaned out of the carriage to beg me, again, not to tell.

"That other girl won't—if she heard anything?" he said. "You needn't fear for Dave," he added, shaking his head sagely. "He could live down anything; nobody but me knows Dave!"

And off they went, Dave drawing the wrappings around his charge, and driving very carefully over the rough road.

Alice Yorke went on her homeward way alone. Her face was flushed and her eyesshowed traces of tears. She was very sympathetic and she had been deeply moved. Who would not be moved at Dave's self-sacrifice—so noble even if unwise.

Cyrus was alone in the counting-room, wading through rows of figures that showed an ever more and more hopeless result. No one even remembered him, I thought, but me. Dave was becoming a hero in Alice Yorke's eyes and my feelings were so queerly mixed about it, and my head so full of romantic ideas that I doubted whether I really was Bathsheba Dill of Palmyra, with only a talent for sage cheese and an aspiration toward sausages.

Estelle walked silently by my side, carelessly swinging the little basket, in which she had brought Dave's pudding, and trying to look as if this were not one of the red-letter days of her life.

When we reached the vessel upon the stocks a sudden pang seized me. It was the last vessel that would ever be built in ouryard! Ever since grandfather was a young man the finest ships in the state had been built and launched here; now so far as his

descendants were concerned the business had all come to an end. Cyrus' sacrifice had been made in vain.

"O, poor Cyrus!" I murmured from the fulness of my heart.

"Bathsheba! do you mean that you pity him because of Dave and Alice Yorke?" exclaimed Estelle. There was actually a little dancing fun in her eye. "Fancy dear old Cyrus having a heart!"

"One wouldn't suppose that they were a common family possession," I said with what I felt to be rather fine sarcasm.

"Now don't be cross, Bathsheba," she said coaxingly. "I know he has, in one way; he has become so softened, he is positively a dear lately—but Cyrus and a girl!—you know one can't help laughing! And for Alice Yorke one would think of some one more—well, more polished, some one likeMr. Carruthers." And she colored as she said it to the very roots of her hair—though why she should I couldn't in the least understand.

"I wasn't thinking of Cyrus in connection with any girl," I said with dignity. "In fact I know of none worthy to be mentioned in the same day with him! I was thinking of the business troubles that are weighing so heavily upon him—of the pitiful thing it is that he should have given up the life-work to which he felt that he was called only to fail after all."

"He can be a minister now; he was never so fit for it as he is now!" said Estelle. "But is it so bad about the business?"

We had reached the top of the orchard slope and she turned and looked back at the shipyard.

"There is a great deal of Dave," she observed sadly.

"Not enough to do what Cyrus and Uncle Horace couldn't do, even if there were time—if he had any chance," I answered.

"Poor Dave!" murmured Estelle, "if he only had a chance! Or even if Rob wouldn't hang on to him so!"

"Your apple-bank money paid the horse's board!" I said.

"I didn't know what Dave was going to do with it. I found out that he wanted money, so I gave it to him," she said simply.

As we reached the house I saw an empty coffee-cup, with a spoon in it, set upon the outer sill of a window that opened upon the porch.

"Has a tramp been here, Loveday?" I asked; for she was tender-hearted toward the highway fraternity.

"There was a man here that I gave a cup of coffee to," said Loveday with evidently no mind for details.

"Did he come up the road from the shipyard?" I asked eagerly and with a sinking of the heart—for of course there were men who looked like Uncle Horace. "And was he very tall and angular?"

“Land, Miss Bathsheba, I don’t know which way he came nor which way he went, and I never got nobody to take his pictur!” said Loveday crisply. “I know he looked white and wore out and hadn’t no appreciation of good victuals. He shook his head at everything I offered him and swallered the coffee as if it wa’n’t no better’n spring bitters.”

It seemed unlikely that Loveday would take such liberties with Uncle Horace as to offer him a cup of coffee—he was not a person with whom any one took liberties. But the glare was reassuring; and it was just possible that there had been a tramp.

Dave received the letter from Ned Carruthers that night. I knew that he had by his face when he entered the house. The “aliens” both have telltale faces. We older ones have countenances of the grave New England type and far less mobile.

There had not been such a look as this on Dave’s face since that dreadful Thanksgiving day. My heart thrilled with the thought thatI had had a little share, at least, in the hastening of his joy.

“I want Estelle!” was what he said. And besides being natural, since she was his very own, I said to myself that it was just. How did Mohammed explain his devotion to his old and ugly wife? “It was Chadidja who believed in me.”

But I walked the floor until Estelle called me to her studio at the top of the house where Dave had found her.

“Things come round so queerly in this world!” remarked Dave by way of preliminary to his news. “That fellow Carruthers—the one who gave me away to the college authorities—has turned up. It seems Estelle and—and Miss Yorke, know his sister and have met him at her studio. I suppose I am indebted to that fact for his interest in my affairs. At all events he shows a disposition to make amends. He doesn’t seem to be quite so much of a cad as I thought. And by a strange chance he seems to have some influenceover an old Crœsus to whom I sent a design for a yacht. He had advertised for one. I happened to see the paper. Seeing what clumsy old-fashioned models we followed in building ships, had made me look into those things and I thought I knew just how a yacht ought to be built. I’ve had something to do with yachts on the river, you know, and I have been drawing that kind of thing all my life.

“It was a pretty good design—if I do say it.” He wagged his head with boyish satisfaction. “But of course Mr. Salter received a great many and I think Carruthers really did hurry him up on mine. Perhaps he may have shown him how good it was, too. Carruthers knows a thing or two about yachts, it seems. He is going to have one himself, now that he has come into a lot of money. I don’t believe he would have been such a sneak up there at the college if he hadn’t lost his temper thinking we were a lot of hypocrites.”

“I am so glad, Dave,” I said, “and yet I wish—I can’t help wishing that you had developed a capacity for business.” I did not mean to be a damper on his delight, but in a sudden reaction of feeling the trouble that was on its way seemed unendurable. “I

can’t bear that the old shipyard and everything that was so dear to grandpa’s heart should be lost to us forever!”

Dave flushed in the sensitive way he had which seemed so incongruous with his giant-like physique.

“Perhaps—perhaps I shall be able to save the day,” he said.

But I will admit that I didn’t see how drawing successful designs for yachts was going to save the shipyard, although Estelle looked as if her faith were equal even to that strain.

Dave went to the city the next morning to see Mr. Salter and Ned Carruthers. He spoke of his whilom foe as if he had quite forgiven him; indeed if there had been noattempt to make amends Dave was incapable of cherishing resentment. Without any question of amiability or a Christian spirit, which I think the dear boy really had, he was easy as we of the Partridge nose were not—though one should “bray us in a mortar,” for it we could not help being hard.

He told Cyrus his business and confided to me, afterward, with real feeling, how kind and sympathetic Cyrus had been.

“Cyrus is no end of a good fellow when you really get at him,” he said. “He tried not to let me see that he didn’t think much of drawing, anyway.”

“Cyrus knows that life is not for play or for doing just what one wants to,” I said sharply.

Ah, well! it was not long before I repented me of that disagreeable speech.

Dave gave me a queer, quizzical look but said not a word.

Rob was very ill again after Dave had gone; his anxiety lest his father should discoverDave’s sacrifice was renewed and they had not yet been able to discover where the old horse, Lucifer, had been taken when Alf Reeder, who had been hired to board and care for it, had moved away from his stock farm. And Rob seemed never to have these two anxieties out of his mind. I wondered that they should have trusted the men from whom they had bought the old horse and who had cruelly tried to race him, to take care of him, but it seemed that the man had laid all the blame upon the horse’s trainer, declaring that he was unaware of the horse’s condition and promising to use the greatest care and skill to restore him to health and strength. And after all, as Octavia said, Dave and Rob were only boys—only Palmyra boys, at that, who could not be expected to know anything of the world.

Dave had gone off about his own business while they were still uncertain as to the horse’s whereabouts, Alf Reeder having left letters of inquiry unanswered. Rob thoughtit was altogether selfish of Dave to do this. He felt himself to be helpless and deserted and his nervous suffering increased his illness.

His nurse was worn out and Loveday, famously good in sickness, went often to her assistance.

“There’s more than Master Rob that needs nursing over there,” said Loveday. “In all my born days I never see Mr. Horace Pa’tridge, nor no other one of the Pa’tridges, so broke down.”

I met Uncle Horace in the road and he went by me without speaking and with bowed head.

I had the glove in my hand. I had seen him coming and had meant to return it to him, telling him just where I had found it. It was wicked and revengeful, but he had been perfectly sardonic about Dave. I felt almost certain that he knew the whole story now—although the others took it for granted that it was the business troubles that had so changed him.

I was brought to a better mind by the sight of him and hid the glove under my cape. When I reached home I asked Loveday if the tramp to whom she had given coffee on the day of our return from the city was Uncle Horace.

“Well, now, seein’ you’re so sharp, Miss Bathsheba, mebbe I might as well own up that it was,” said Loveday. “He looked so white and ’peared so kind of queer that I was scared and I felt as if ’twas best to say nothin’ about it.”

I told Loveday, then, all that had happened that day and how all Dave’s disgrace had been borne for Rob’s sake.

Loveday rocked furiously in the kitchen rocking-chair, saying only “suz-a-day! suz-a-day!” at intervals.

“I got an inklin’ of it, Miss Bathsheba,” she exclaimed when I had finished. “Long in the winter I got an inklin’ of it. Such doin’s as they accused our boy of I knew wa’n’t in him. Land! you can’t take care ofa young man from the day he comes into the world without knowin’ whether there’s any mean kind of wickedness in him or not!

“When I come acrost that photograph, a-sweepin’ out Hiram’s wagon, one day, so’st’ everything shouldn’t get spiled with dust, I knew the minute I clapped my eyes on to it that ’twas old Lucifer that Mr. Pa’tridge sold jest because Master Rob was so foolish about him.

“The photograph was marked ‘Alf Reeder’s racer, Prince Charley,’ and I got an inklin’. I knew there wasn’t hardly anything in this livin’ world that our boy wouldn’t do for Master Rob, and I knew how terrible afraid Master Rob was of his father. And he never had a bit of patience, his father hadn’t, with his bein’ foolish over animals. He took it from his mother, Master Rob did, and Mr. Pa’tridge never could put up with it in her, for all he was so fond of her. Land! I remember when he carried off a little mite of a white kitten of hers and had it drowned jestbecause she thought so much of it! He wa’n’t never a cruel man to dumb creturs neither, Mr. Pa’tridge wa’n’t; he always treats his live-stock well; but he couldn’t put up with no foolishness over ’em. There’s no denyin’, Miss Bathsheba, but what he’s kind of a hard man, though he never took it from your sainted grandpa or your blessed grandma.

“And he’s knowin’ to it now! Mr. Pa’tridge is knowin’ to it! And I thinkin’ all the time that ’twas only the business troubles that had ketched a holt of him so!”

“The business troubles are bad enough, Loveday,” I said dejectedly.

“Bad enough, Miss Bathsheba,” repeated Loveday, “but nothin’, nothin’——” Loveday gave way to a burst of tears, the first I had ever seen her shed—“compared to the happiness of knowin’ that neither one of them blessed boys is startin’ in to be ruffin’s like them I see to that terrible place! Yes, forgin’ his father’s name was aterrible thing, but you and I know, Miss Bathsheba, that that blessed boy never realized what he was a-doin’, bein’ so crazy to get back his poor old horse. And Mr. Pa’tridge knows it, he knows it all, and comin’ jest now ’long with the business troubles I’m afraid he ain’t a-goin’ to stan’ it! It’s broke down his pride and pride always ’peared to be the strongest part of your Uncle Horace!

“And Master Rob is in a terrible bad way; he’s never been in so bad a way as he is now. He’s took it hard, Mr. Pa’tridge has, that he wa’n’t strong like other boys, but it ’pears to me it would kill him certain to lose him now.”

It did seem as if troubles were overwhelming us. Cyrus still played checkers with grandma and kept her in ignorance of the coming trouble, but he forgetfully played so well, now, as to beat her often, to her great humiliation.

Poor grandma! she wept, occasionally, childish tears, because Dave worked in theshipyard, but his disgrace remained only as a dim, dark cloud in the background of her memory. But we were afraid of the effect that it might have upon her to know that the shipyard was to be sold.

While things were in this state and Dave still lingered, unaccountably, in the city, sending no definite news of his reasons, Estelle had her modest little success which I fear we none of us thought much about. Her drawings were accepted and more were ordered for the same magazine. It was hard to see the child’s radiant delight overshadowed by the family troubles.

She said that the check seemed large because it made her a responsible member of society, but small because it would not save the shipyard!

But the order for more was the main thing, as I—a business woman!—assured her. Who could say what this opportunity might bring forth in time to come?

But there was no time—no time to wait!Estelle cried breathlessly. She seemed to feel more than any of us the loss of grandfather’s old business—more than any, except perhaps Cyrus.

“It is because I can’t help thinking that things might have been different—Cyrus might have followed the profession for which he was better fitted if there had not been Dave and me to be taken care of,—‘the aliens,’ as you used to——”

I stopped her mouth with my hand. “Aliens! did we ever?” I cried. “It is the best of us that we call you now—ask Octavia! And you said, yourself, that Cyrus was never so well fitted to be a minister as now!”

But grandpa’s shipyard—must it go?

Nothing would comfort Estelle. And she was out of patience with Dave, whom she pictured to herself—and even to me although she was so loyal—as being beguiled by pretty teas at Peggy Carruthers' studio. She even asked him in one of her letters how Miss Bocock's storks came on!—when he hadnever even mentioned Peggy Carruthers or her studio!

Loveday sang about her work the hymn which she always fell back upon in troublous times:

"The day is a-wastin', wastin', wastin',
The day is a-wastin', night draws nigh;
Lord in the twilight, Lord in the deep night,
Lord in the midnight be Thou nigh."

I thought sometimes that the refrain, "The day is a-wasting, wasting, wasting," would drive me mad. The day was wasting and would no one come to save grandpa's shipyard?

Still Dave lingered and Uncle Horace had gone away suddenly; he had gone "up country," Cyrus said; he did not know on what business; certainly not on any that was connected with the shipyard.

And then a very astonishing thing happened. Loveday had ceased her hymn-singing and had come as near to being cross as Loveday ever did. One day she summoned Octavia and me to a private interview in thekitchen. She locked all the doors and then stopped up the keyholes. Viola had, as we all knew, her weaknesses; but such precautions as these pointed to a revelation of unusual importance. As a general thing Loveday was serenely indifferent to Viola's eaves-dropping.

"Loveday, Master Rob isn't—isn't worse?" I asked breathlessly—for she had just come from Uncle Horace's.

"He ain't no worse, nor yet he ain't no better, nor he won't be no better while things are as they be now. But that ain't neither here nor there to what I've got to say," said Loveday. She was in a state of great excitement and struggling hard for composure. I had seen the hand that filled the keyholes tremble; the ringlets dependent from her gray head were actually dancing.

My thoughts were a wild chaos of apprehension, which I dared not put into words. Had she heard that an accident had befallen Dave? Had she heard that grandma, whohad gone to second-cousin Sarah Saunders' to spend the day, had been smitten with paralysis? Had Uncle Horace become insane? Had some one stolen the contents of the blue yarn stocking which she kept between mattresses?—for Loveday would never trust her savings to a bank. Was she going to offer the contents of the blue stocking to aid in saving the shipyard?—that would be like Loveday, I thought, if she could possibly think that so small a sum would be of any avail.

Loveday sat down by the window and averted her face from us as she began to speak, a wholly unnatural thing for Loveday to do.

“Hiram’s a-comin’ home,” she said, and she imparted this altogether ordinary information in a voice that was strained and shaking. “He ain’t a-goin’ to have no tunin’ spell this spring. He’s a-goin’ to start right off agin with the photographin’ wagon.”

There was a pause in which Octavia and Ilooked at each other with, I am sure, the same fear in both our minds. Had the family troubles, to use Loveday’s own expression, “flew to her head”?

Why, otherwise, should she make this ado about Hiram Nute’s peregrinations, to which we had been so accustomed from childhood that we paid no more heed to them than to the periodical flights of the wild geese over our heads? Loveday turned her face toward us in a timid way, if such an adjective can possibly be applied to Loveday’s manner. Her eyes drooped and her color wavered—the apple-red which seemed sometimes to have settled upon her high cheek-bones.

“’Pears as if ’twould kind of come handy for me to go with him,” she said.

CHAPTER XIV
WE FIND OURSELVES OWN FOLKS AT LAST

"I'VE kep' Hiram waitin' consid'able of a spell," continued Loveday, in a firmer voice. "I wa'n't but seventeen when he first come a-courtin' me, and now I'm risin' forty. I wa'n't never one that felt a partickler call to matrimony, nor that thought they had any great tarlent for it. And the Lord 'peared to have filled my hands consid'able full where he'd sot me."

"Dear Loveday! I should think He had!" murmured Octavia.

My heart was too full for words. I seemed to realize, for the first time, what Loveday had been to us. Groundnut Hill Farm without her was a thing which my imaginationfailed to grasp. I stared at her in blank dismay.

"It wouldn't 'pear to be a time to think of marryin' or givin' in marriage, when there's family troubles," continued Loveday; "not without there was partickler reasons, as you might say. But—but Hiram he kind of needs now to be took care of——"

"And you have been taking care of us instead all these years!" I said, self-reproachfully, for we had always regarded this romance of Loveday's as only a matter to smile at.

"'Tain't that so much," amended Loveday, conscientiously. "I can't say as I was ever one that felt a real call to take care of a man person—but—but it seems to come handy that we should get married right now. Hiram's a professor and a God-fearin' man if ever there was one, and yet I can't feel to trust him to go everywheres alone—men folks bein' so easy carried away."

This was puzzling; for had not Hiram,from his youth up, gone on his traveling tours alone?

"Besides, he hain't got quite so much spunk to carry things through as what I have, if I do say it," Loveday continued, thoughtfully.

Was Loveday becoming mercenary and longing that Hiram's business should have the aid of her superior "spunk"? I felt a cold chill in the shadow of suspicion, of which I was ashamed the next moment, that Loveday was fleeing from our falling fortunes.

"But we want you to have a beautiful wedding, Loveday," said Octavia. "And just now——"

"'Twill be day after to-morrer to the minister's," said Loveday firmly. "I shall be marryin' in the Lord and 'twon't be a mite of matter if I don't have a good black silk, as I always calc'lated to."

"Day after to-morrow!" echoed Octavia and I, in a dismayed chorus.

"And if there ain't no objections I'm a-comin' back ag'in, after we have a little weddin' tour. It'll mebbe be only a short one, and then ag'in mebbe 'twill take some

time. I've got Viola pretty well broke in. Her riz biscuits is fair to middlin', and her pies 'n' cakes ain't pison. I can feel to trust her for a week or two, anyhow."

"And you're coming back? O, Loveday, how delightful!" we cried. "But you shouldn't have given us such a fright."

"I never expected but what you knew that here was where the Lord had sot me," said Loveday, with a surprised, almost an injured expression of countenance. "Why, land sake! I don't expect I could live nowheres but at Groundnut Hill Farm as long as there was such a place. There is creturs that sheds their skins, they say, but the Lord never made me one of that kind.

"Hiram he's of a rovin' disposition. He always was and he always will be. If there ain't no objection 'twill come kind of handyfor him to come here between times, or when he has a tunin' spell and I can patch and button and better him. Hiram was always one that needed being looked after reg'lar—same as I always have."

"It will be beautiful! Just as if you were not married at all," we said, with intense relief, and if we wondered that Hiram could be trusted again after the wedding tour it was only vaguely, for Loveday's ideas were not always easy to follow.

Hiram appeared the next day in very high spirits. As difficult as it was for Loveday to write letters, she had evidently informed her loyal lover that it was her sovereign behest to name the day. She snubbed him for his gaiety, nevertheless. In spite of her strange choice of a wedding day, it was evident that Loveday felt keenly the troubles that overshadowed the family.

Photography was the business that came next in order in Hiram's "combernation," but his bride elected that essence-peddling shouldbe continued for the wedding journey. The photograph wagon was too slow and cumbersome, she said, for a wedding tour. It was "her way to do things up kind of spry."

Hiram insisted upon re-painting his wagon for the occasion, although there was a fear that the paint would not be dry, and the picture of himself, which adorned the side, was painted with the brilliant purple necktie which he meant to wear at his wedding. Loveday was not willing that we should even go to the minister's with her, but we lay in ambush behind Mr. Grover's willow hedge, and all of us, even Cyrus—Alice Yorke was with us,—threw rice and old shoes after the wedding carriage that is, the essence wagon, which, with its new and brilliant coat of paint, looked as festal as befitted the occasion.

Loveday, who disapproved of such demonstrations, sat grimly disregarding, while we followed on with cheers, until the last Palmyra corner, the post road, was reached. Then she relented and turned toward us abashful, becomingly tearful face, that was hardly to be recognized as Loveday's.

Notices of the coming bankruptcy sale were posted upon the Palmyra fences. They stared at us shamelessly, sickeningly on all the dear, familiar roads, turning spring's verdant delights into a mockery. Even on the banks of our beautiful river were these hideous signs, printed large, that they might be read from steamer and

vessel. As far away as the port the dreadful announcement flaunted at every corner. We were forced to invent pretexts to prevent grandma from taking her accustomed drives, lest they should be read by even her dim, old eyes, so large were the letters.

Only a few days before the one which was set for the auction sale, “Evelyn Marchmont” came home. It was I who brought from the post-office the dreadful, bulky package that represented so much labor and effort and hope.

None of the trite sayings are so true as that misfortunes never come singly. To carry itto Octavia was almost more than I could bear to do just now!

It was a Saturday morning, and she and Estelle were together in the latter’s attic studio. They were very often together now; a real intimacy had developed since the city experience.

I will admit that I sometimes felt a little shut out. And yet there is a satisfaction in the production of cheese and preserves, if you feel that you have a real talent in that direction, that I believe is scarcely inferior to that which one feels in the production of literature and art! Moreover, I didn’t refuse to accept the consolation that Octavia offered me. Better pictures and stories were being continually brought forth than either she or Estelle could ever hope to give to the world, she said, while no one could ever beat me at sage cheese or quince jelly!

I wondered whether, since the old house was built, anybody had ever carried a heavier burden up those attic stairs than “EvelynMarchmont” was to me! I sat down upon the top-stair feeling that I could get no farther with my heavy heart and the dreadful package.

“I thought I saw Bathsheba coming from the office,” I heard Estelle say. “Perhaps we shall hear to-day.”

And then I steeled my nerves and went into the studio. I only hoped that Octavia would not weep. She seldom did, but when the tears came it was in a tempest. I stood speechless while Octavia looked at the package.

“Oh, Evelyn has come back!” she exclaimed, lightly. “I knew it would. You needn’t think I mind, Bathsheba! I’ve had all those pangs and gotten over them. I don’t need to be told now that I can’t do that sort of thing. But oh, Estelle, there is a letter for you! Do hurry and open it!”

She tossed the package carelessly upon the table, and watched Estelle, breathlessly, while she opened the letter. A thin strip ofpaper fluttered out, of a kind happily known to prosperous makers of cheese and preserves!

“We find your sister’s little stories charming,” read Estelle, in a voice that was half-choked with delight. “We enclose a check for the two first sent, and shall examine the others at once. The fact that they have been used in her kindergarten would not injure them at all for our use, and we should be glad to consider any others that she may have on hand. We recognize a new touch in them, and should be glad to have her submit a serial for our magazine to run for three or six months. Your very original drawings illustrate your sister’s work so strikingly that we prophesy for your

work done in conjunction a real success, and should, indeed, be glad to have you give us the refusal of anything in our line that you may do."

Oh, and then there was hilarity in the studio! We were none of us so very old, and, of course, one could not expect Estellewhose own affair this was, to take it very quietly.

"Only the little stories that I wrote for my kindergarten. Estelle would send them," explained Octavia, with joyful tears. "Fancy their finding a new touch in them and prophesying a real success! See what they say!" she added, as I picked up "Evelyn Marchmont" from the floor where it had fallen.

I opened the package, and read from a printed slip.

"The publishers regret that their list of books for the coming year is already so large that they are obliged to return your interesting manuscript."

The following P. S. was added: "The criticism of one of our readers is enclosed, as it is thought that the writer may possibly find a valuable suggestion in it."

I handed the enclosed scrap of blue paper to Octavia, and she read aloud: "A commonplace story, not without interest, althoughof somewhat stilted and old-fashioned diction. The author's material is incidentally derived from books rather than from life. She would do better if she should make use of her every-day experiences of life in writing, and not go beyond her own environment."

"I have found that out for myself," said Octavia, quickly. "Experience and publishers' readers sometimes point to the same conclusion, it seems! To think of my little kindergarten stories and jingles promising to be a real success—that, with the aid of Estelle's bunchy babies! More than half the success, I am sure, will be hers. And if ever I write another word I will look to Palmyra for my material!"

We were still talking over the joy and the wonder of this good fortune, and I had just suggested that Cyrus must be told at once, that he might at least have the practical comfort of knowing that we could all take care of ourselves, when a voice called, at the foot of the stairs:

"May I come up?"

"Of course you may," returned Estelle, for it was Alice Yorke.

And Alice came up with her cheeks so vividly aglow that I felt like warning her against running up-stairs; but there was such a chattering that I couldn't. And when one came to look closely at her one saw that her eyes were shining in a soft and misty fashion, as if she were deeply moved. But at the time Estelle was pouring out upon her the tale of the delightful double success, and it was no wonder, I thought, that she looked so. Alice was so very sympathetic.

But before long it occurred to me, suddenly, that she was, in spite of her looks, a little absent-minded; as if she might have a tale of her own to tell, and a sudden suspicion seized me.

I longed to ask her if she knew the reason why Dave lingered, but I did not quite dare. She grew visibly ill at ease, walking about the studio, examining things

which she hadseen fifty times before, and asking questions whose answers she knew by heart. Then she stood by the window and drummed upon the pane, and remarked that the robins in the old elm-tree were wise to build their nest so high above the reach of prowling cats. And suddenly she wheeled about, and came toward us, and burst forth, between laughter and crying:

"Girls, I don't know how to tell you, and I don't know how you'll take it at such a time as this; but I—I promised him that I would tell you that—that if you don't mind I'm going to be your sister!"

Estelle was the first to get at her and throw her arms around her neck.

"It's just what I've wanted, you know that, you little hypocrite! And you're such a dear that you're almost good enough for him, and you'll almost make up to him for what he has suffered!"

Now I must admit that while I was glad for Dave I had a horrible pang of jealousy for Cyrus. I couldn't help feeling that Davehad the lighter nature, although he had in some ways shown himself so strong, that there might be many a light fancy for him while for Cyrus there would never be any woman but Alice Yorke.

I remembered the look in Cyrus' face that day in the shipyard, when Dave had so coolly monopolized her and I sat stupidly cold and dumb.

Octavia, whose short-sightedness was proverbial in the matter of romances, was almost as demonstrative as Estelle. She said that "perhaps the dear fellow ought not to think of marrying just yet——" "Oh, no, no, we are both willing to wait!" Alice interpolated, quickly—but that she could not think of a girl whom she would rather he would have chosen for a wife. And as for a sister-in-law, she well knew how we should all love and prize her.

And finally I managed to blurt out, like the bashful guest at a wedding: "I hope you'll be happy."

But I said it I knew, with a doubtful accent, and not until Octavia and Estelle had stared at me, in reproachful dismay, and Alice had begun to look deeply hurt.

"I think the discipline he has had has been good for him, although some of us feel that it was rather uncalled for, but that he will be nobler and stronger for it always," said Octavia.

"I know I'm not good enough for him," said Alice, meekly. "But I am going to try to be, and learn just how a minister's wife ought to behave."

"A minister's wife!" gasped Octavia and Estelle in chorus.

But I, who am not the quick-witted one of the family, I sprang up and hugged her.

Estelle collapsed on a hassock.

"You no-end-of-a-humbug, we thought it was Dave," she cried.

"That boy!" exclaimed Alice Yorke, who was herself nearly two years younger thanthe boy. "Cyrus thought so, and I—I had almost to ask him to have me!"

“If you have broken Dave’s heart you shall answer for it to me!” said Estelle. But she laughed. She evidently shared my opinion, that Dave’s heart was not very brittle.

Nevertheless, to this day I am not sure about it!

With all these gleams of sunshine the dreaded day of the auction sale came steadily on, and poor Cy’s happiness only showed itself occasionally in a flash of light across his worn face. I knew that he reproached himself for thinking of any happiness of his own at such a time.

On the very day before that appointed for the auction, Cyrus received a telegram from Dave, from whom no one had been able to hear a word for more than a fortnight.

“Stop sale, if possible. Can satisfy creditors!”

The telegram was brought to the housewhile we were at breakfast. Cyrus turned white to the lips as he read it.

“If there could be a chance!” he murmured, while grandma chirped to the canary in blissful unconcern. “But what is it possible for the boy to do? We have no credit now because we have no prospects! You don’t think I would have left any stone unturned, Bathsheba? It would be useless for me to try to stop the sale!”

“But Dave is not one to get foolish fancies into his head,” I insisted.

“Dave is a good fellow, but he’s only twenty,” said Cyrus; and threw the telegram into the waste-basket.

“I wish—I wish that Uncle Horace had not gone away,” I said, desperately.

“He could do nothing,” said Cyrus, patiently. “Besides, he is almost unbalanced by his anxiety about Rob.”

Cyrus went off, repeating that it was useless to try to stop the sale; but at the gate he was met by the assignee, into whose handsthe creditors had put their claims. He also had received a telegram, and was disposed to be governed by it. His had come from the millionaire, Solomon Salter. That was the man for whose yacht Dave had made the design.

He came down to Palmyra with Dave the next day—a little man, with a curly wig, sharp eyes and frisky little movements, like a squirrel’s. I may as well say here that we learned afterward, that under a sharp and business-like outward presentment he concealed a heart as big as his fortune, which is not supposed to be characteristic of millionaires. But it was not his heart which saved the day for us; it was, as he assured us, purely a business matter. He wished a yacht built, and had been convinced by Dave that we had just the facilities for building yachts at our shipyard. Young Carruthers, of whose property he was trustee, wished to have a yacht built also, and there were others whose custom he could influence in our direction.

Those boys, Dave and Ned Carruthers, had had to spend some time talking him round; he had a good many irons in the fire, but he liked Dave’s design and he liked his pluck. He had talked with him enough to know that he was a business man as well

as an artist, and he thought that with the little lift that he should be glad to give him the business might go on prosperously.

"Do you dare to trust it all to Dave?" I asked Cyrus, wonderingly, as I saw that the cloud of care had lifted from his face.

"Yes, with the proper backing; he is a great fellow, Dave, you know!" said Cyrus.

It was a gala day in Palmyra when those hateful placards were taken down and the large force of men that had been discharged was hired again to work in the shipyard. Dave did not seem to me to be as happy as he should be, but then happiness was dampered a little for us all by anxiety about Rob.

"I haven't neglected that matter of old Lucifer," Dave said to me. "I have beentelegraphing to different places where Alf Reeder might have located, but all in vain. Ned Carruthers has gone up to New Hampshire now, and I'm going to follow just as soon as possible, though it seems like a wild goose chase."

I didn't dare to tell him that I thought Uncle Horace knew the whole truth. I did not know how he would feel when he knew that all his sacrifice made to protect Rob from his father had been made in vain.

"It has come to the point where nothing but that horse will save Rob's life," continued Dave, "and if I can find him I am simply going to bring him home with me."

"But Uncle Horace——?" I questioned.

"I think we have all been infected with Rob's terror of his father," said Dave. "I have a right to own any horse that I please."

"You will have when you are twenty-one," I retorted. For a defiance of Uncle Horace seemed to me a reckless thing.

Dave adhered to his determination, andwas starting off one morning to catch the steamer, when, borne upon the breezes to our ears, as we stood in the porch, came the sound of the horn with which Hiram Nute always announced his arrival in Palmyra.

"I should have thought that Loveday would have suppressed the horn," Octavia remarked.

But Loveday looked proud and happy, perched beside Hiram upon the resplendent wagon.

But Hiram came not with a cracking of his whip and at a lively speed, as usual, but with a slowness that made us fear that something was the matter. Dave lingered to greet them, although he would have to run to be in time for the boat.

"We have come slow 'count of this poor old cretur!" explained Loveday from afar, in her high, shrill tones. "He's most beat out."

And now we saw, hitched to the back of the wagon, a poor old horse, whose headhung dejectedly, and whose ribs could be counted.

“You’ve got him!” cried Dave, and dropped his traveling-bag and his overcoat in the garden path.

“Well, I never calc’lated to come without him, though one time I didn’t know as we should fetch anything but his body,” said Loveday. “That man, Alf Reeder, had gone clear’n off to Canady and left the horse on his brother’s old, wore out farm, where there wa’n’t a bite for a grasshopper. There he was pocketin’ the money for his keep and poor old Lucifer a-starvin’! But there! what can you expect of them bettin’ kind of folks that’s used to livin’ on what’s other folks’ loss?”

“I never ought to have trusted him,” said Dave, self-reproachfully. “But he seemed so fair, and I paid him a good price.”

Dave was stroking Lucifer with tender hands, and the old horse looked at him with an almost human gaze.

“I don’t know as we should ever ’a’ got him if it hadn’t been for a young man that said he was a friend of all of you, though I never heard tell of him in my born days—Mr. Edward Carruthers; he give me his card. We fell in with him at a hotel, and first off I thought he was teched, he was so crazy to help find Alf Reeder. And if it didn’t turn out that that was what he’d come for himself—to find the old horse!

“And I never see the beat of the way he stuck to it, and never slep’ nights! He went horseback through the woods and through terrible rough roads, where the wagon couldn’t go. But that ain’t the strangest part!”

Hiram had gallantly assisted his bride to alight, and she stood now with us beside the old horse, and lowered her voice to a mysterious whisper.

“Mr. Horace hain’t got home yet, has he? We come acrost him, too, at a hotel, and if he wa’n’t lookin’ for Alf Reeder, too! We’dgot the old horse then, least way Mr. Carruthers had. He come leadin’ him into the door-yard, while we was standin’ on the porch, and I see Mr. Horace knew him the minute he clapped eyes onto him. And it ’peared to me there wa’n’t nothin’ to do but jest to face the music.

“‘I know it’s old Lucifer,’ says I. ‘He belongs to Mr. David,’ says I, ‘and I’ve come a-purpose to carry him home.’ And then I hadn’t no time to think of what I should say, but something made me real bold! ‘When there’s somethin’ that a sick boy has got his heart on,’ says I, ‘why, there ain’t anything that’ll cure him but jest that thing, and it’s cruelty to keep it from him,’ says I. Now I felt as if the earth would open and swallow me up after I’d said that to Mr. Pa’tridge himself! But what do you think he done?—him that never was one to be free with hired help! He came right up to me and held out his hand for me to shake. And ‘God bless you!’ says he, with his great,strong voice a-shakin’. Mr. Horace that never was a professor!

“‘I guess I’ve been a hard man without realizin’ it, Loveday,’ says he. ‘I heard the truth about myself from some of your young people down in the shipyard one day, and I guess, mebbe, it has fetched me to a better mind,’ says he. ‘I come after the horse myself,’ says he, ‘but you’ve got the start of me.’ Now, wouldn’t you most think he’d really met with a change?”

Dave set out for Uncle Horace's with the old horse after it had been fed and rubbed down, and on the orchard slope I saw him met by the tall gaunt figure that there was no mistaking. After a little parley, Dave put the bridle rein into Uncle Horace's hand, and turned back.

"I thought it would be better that his father should take the horse to Rob," he explained to me when I went to meet him.

But I knew he had denied himself a greatpleasure. It is seldom that a boy has tact like that!

And I must tell him about Cyrus and Alice Yorke! Was any one ever so tormented as I by a divided heart? Now I felt almost resentful against Cyrus.

"Things have turned out so beautifully, haven't they, Dave?" I stammered; "all but——" oh, if I only had a little tact! "O, Dave, do you care?" I blurted out.

He caught my eye and blushed and laughed.

"Poor old Cyrus! he told me, himself," he said; "he fancied I should care, I think. But only imagine Cy making love! How did he ever manage it? It must have been like an elephant dancing. But he got there, didn't he? You never can tell about girls! And he deserves to succeed. I can see now, Bathsheba, that we haven't always appreciated Cyrus."

We! and in the old days he had always reckoned Cyrus and me together. Lovedayneed not have feared that the aliens would never be just like the rest of us.

"Don't trouble about me, Bathsheba," he added, lightly. "There are as good fish in the sea as ever were caught!"

"Dave, have you been going to Peggy Carruthers' little studio teas?" I asked, eagerly.

"Little studio teas!" he echoed, with a non-committal laugh, "as if I were not a business man! I'm not the one that's going to change my name to Carruthers!"

And he went off, whistling gaily; but I didn't know. To this day I don't know! But could I be less than content, as I sat upon the orchard slope and thought of the wonderful way in which things had worked together for good for us all? And we were all in one heart, "own folks" at last, even Rob and his father.

The busy hum of the yard—shipyard—mingled again with the placid song of our beautiful river. The soft, blue summer skybent over us like a benediction, and God's providence was our sure inheritance.

Viola's voice aroused me from my meditations:

"Miss Bathsheba, Leander's cousin has come about the hogs'-head-cheese!" she said.