

## One Result

By Grace Denio Litchfield

**B**EAUTIFUL Mrs. Haviland was dashing through the Park in her victoria, her six-year-old son by her side. The autumn breeze was blowing freshly, and the two exquisite rose-tinted faces, one a smaller replica of the other, made a rare picture. Almost every one turned to look at them as they passed. Those who knew the lady bowed and smiled, or bowed and did not smile, while she had only the same slight but captivating glance of recognition for each. A gentleman on a fine bay joined her before she had gone far, and made the tour beside her carriage. After that still more of the passers turned to look, and fewer smiled as they bowed. But the radiance of her look never faltered, and if the rose of her cheek was somewhat deeper, so was the boy's, and the afternoon was grown cold.

It was five o'clock when the victoria left the Park, and, rolling down the avenue, turned into the broad, substantially built side street near the corner of which was the lady's home. The gentleman on the bay accompanied her as far as the street corner, and there took leave. A little girl, watching with straining eyes from an upstairs window, saw him as he lifted his hat from his handsome blond head, and wondered vaguely who he was. Any one of Mrs. Haviland's many servants could have told her. But Ruth never talked with the servants. She rarely talked even with the nurse or with Miss Murray, her governess, who, however, though a miracle of gentleness and well-preserved if characterless prettiness, was not precisely a confidence-eliciting person. She did not talk much even with her little brother, though she played with him by the hour on rainy afternoons, keeping him absorbed from first to last when no one else could manage the self-willed little fellow for ten minutes at a time.

She went now to the head of the stairs, partly to meet Harry, but more to catch a glimpse of her idolized mother. Harry did not come up, however. Mrs. Haviland's maid was sent for downstairs to

remove her wraps, and Ruth, peeping over the banisters, had a gratifying vision of her mother reflected in the long hall-glass, as the lady stood before it while the maid deftly pinned back a lock escaped from the loose coil of her hair. Do mirrors realize when they are blessed? Not to many is it given to reflect so complete and satisfying a beauty as was this lady's. But all too soon she turned away, and, calling to Harry, took him in with her to the tea-table to stand at her elbow like a bewitching little page while she poured tea. She often took him in with her so—that is, if people were coming.

Ruth went slowly away from her post, therefore, knowing that Harry would not come up as long as the good time lasted. On her way to the school-room she passed her father coming down from his study. He did not see her in the semi-darkness—nobody ever seemed to see Ruth unless there were a bright light—and she slipped silently by, not caring in the least that he had not seen her, nor that if he had he might not have noticed her save by a grave nod. It was Harry whom he always saw and always stopped to speak to. Why should he or any one speak to her? For there was nothing about her even remotely like her mother. She was a singularly plain child, upon whom no amount of tasteful dressing conferred any saving distinction, and the consciousness of her unattractiveness lay like an added blight upon her personality.

It was past the children's supper hour when Harry came dancing into the nursery, where he and Ruth took their meals. Mrs. Haviland, too, would soon be coming upstairs to dress for dinner. Ruth was meditating slipping out into the hall for another sight of her as she swept radiantly down the passage to her room, when—

wonder of wonders!—the nursery door opened and she came in. It was only to give the nurse some direction about Harry's toilette for the next day's drive, but Ruth's heart beat with joy at the sight of her.

Harry was looking particularly charming just then. His curls were tumbled all

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over his forehead, and his face was flushed with the heat of the room till it looked like a ripe peach. As he ran up to his mother to snatch at a charm hanging from the glittering chain about her neck, she actually stooped and kissed him. Ruth held her breath, marveling at Harry's stolidity. She knew well that at the bottom of his selfish, hard little heart Harry cared less for his mother than for the least precious of his countless toys; but the surprise of it hurt the little girl like a fresh wound at each manifestation of his indifference. What was their beautiful mother for, if not to be worshiped by all with the intense, self-effacing adoration which in Ruth's soul was love's only form?

Late that evening the nurse called her from her bed to look at Mrs. Haviland as she passed through the corridor, arrayed for a ball in all her diamonds, looking like a dream of light. And when, attracted by the little group at the bedroom door, Mrs. Haviland glanced toward it, smiling the same lovely impersonal smile that she had bestowed on her acquaintances in the afternoon's drive, Ruth's heart beat even faster than before, and she crept back to bed in a silent rapture that kept her wide awake for some time. It was such wonderful moments as these that had counted for the chief pleasures in the child's ten short years of life.

The autumn passed, and still Mrs. Haviland drove in the Park in her open victoria, while the handsome blond gentleman reined in his bay by its side; and fewer and fewer people smiled as they bowed. Then came an afternoon in early December, when the sun was a glory and the earth seemed a heaven, and Mrs. Haviland went for her drive somewhat earlier than her wont. She went alone this time. Ruth, just returned from a demure little walk with Miss Murray, knelt at the school-room window and breathlessly watched her as she drove away. There was always the chance that she might look back—might look up—though she never did. She did not now.

The carriage came back almost at once, but Mrs. Haviland was not in it. There were only the two men on the box, and a note from Mrs. Haviland to her husband.

When the footman brought it in, Mr. Haviland was in the hall putting on his overcoat to go for a walk up the avenue.

He took the note, and as he read, his face turned to stone. He read it twice from beginning to end—it was not long. Then, quite quietly, he refolded the dainty sheet and returned it to its envelope, put it in his pocket, took off his overcoat and handed it to the waiting butler, all without a word, but still with that face of stone, and, turning, went slowly up the two long flights of stairs to his study, and there shut himself in.

An extraordinary stillness settled down all at once over the house. The servants, mysteriously sagacious, went noiselessly about their business as usual, lighting all the lights in all the great empty rooms, and setting out the dining-table with its customary elegance. But Mr. Haviland remained shut up in his study, and no dinner was served, and no orders were given, and Mrs. Haviland did not return. Miss Murray looked agitated and scared, and as if she were trying to shrink into herself out of the way of an impending shower-bath, and Ruth was sent to bed long before her hour.

The next morning Mrs. Haviland still had not come back, and the same hush of uneasy expectancy pervaded the house like a noxious atmosphere. Ruth had no idea of what had happened. She knew only that her adored mother did not come, though she watched and watched all the day long, and could scarcely be gotten away from the window.

So some vacuous, miserable days went by, each more wretched than the last. Then one morning Mr. Haviland summoned Miss Murray from the school-room to his study, and she was gone some time. When she came back, her soft, young-old face had lost its delicate color, and she could hardly take the seat at her desk for a nervous tremor through her. But the children's wide-eyed stare of curiosity forced her to pull herself together, and after a few moments she said to them quite simply, just as if she were stating a fact in physical geography, though with an uncontrollable twitching of her thin, ladylike lips, that Mr. Haviland wished them to know that their mother was never coming back at all, but was the same as dead to them, and that they must be obedient children and never so much as mention her name in his hearing. That was the point that Miss Murray laid the

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most stress on—that they were never to speak of her again.

Harry did not mind a whit that his mother was gone away for always. He just opened his glorious eyes wider and asked: "Then who will take me out to drive when I have my good clothes on?"

Ruth made no outcry and asked no question. But the blackness of night descended upon her soul.

An hour later their father came in. Harry gave a whoop of delight, and, dashing his slate to the floor, ran to him tempestuously, shouting, "I want a nickel! Dad, give me a nickel!"

Mr. Haviland stood stock still and looked fixedly at his boy, the shadow upon his marble face deepening into something almost like contempt. Then he flung down a handful of small coins upon the carpet quite angrily, and went out of the room immediately, without having said a syllable to any one.

Harry laughed with glee as he flung himself upon the rolling bits of silver. The nurse chanced to be in the room, and Ruth saw her glance meaningly at Miss Murray as she muttered: "It's Master Harry's looks. He is as like her as two peas, and not in looks only, more's the pity!"

Ruth did not understand the full import of the words, though their dimly apprehended scorn roused in her an impotent fury, and she clenched her tiny hands under the table. No one ever guessed what of desolation it meant to the child when her beautiful mother disappeared so suddenly out of her life. But they all saw how listless and apathetic she grew, and how dully she went through her routine of small duties and pleasures, no one of which interested or aroused her in the least. The moment she was left to herself she always went directly to the school-room window, and sat there with her arms folded on the sill and her chin resting upon them, motionless save for the restless, roving eyes that missed no figure that went by. But she never told any one for whom she was watching.

Her father came regularly now to the nursery, where he had been used to come only occasionally. It was, however, merely to ask perfunctory questions of the nurse or governess as to the welfare of his children, and he was so changed, so silent

and stern, where formerly he had been only grave, that Ruth shrank from him. With her mother's going, a blank wall seemed to have risen between her and everything else on earth. Miss Murray said of her with solicitous discontent that she was a singularly old little girl. And so she was, since heartaches count for years.

By degrees, as time went by and Ruth's abstraction increased, the talk around her grew less guarded, and one day, when two of the maids were whispering across their sewing, she overheard something that drove her straight to her governess with a point-blank question.

"Please, Miss Murray, where in this city is my mother's new home?"

Miss Murray was so taken aback and so flustered that all the little laces on her gown were set to quivering.

"Why, Ruthie—child—however—however did you find out that—that your mother was in the city at all?" she stammered.

"Ellen said so. She was talking to Sophie. She said that the new marriage was no better than a mock marriage. She said that she was brazen-faced to come back and take a house not ten squares away from us." The child's tones were fierce with uncomprehending resentment.

Miss Murray's gentle face wrinkled all over with perturbation. She laid a frightened, bloodless hand against Ruth's mouth.

"Hush, dear, hush! Ellen must have meant some one else. Ellen had no idea what she was saying. Ellen never meant anything."

Ruth pushed aside Miss Murray's hand roughly. An obstinate determination was over all her face.

"I want to see my mother. Where is my mother?" she said, doggedly.

The direct, insistent gaze was not to be avoided. Miss Murray's anxious brown eyes twinkled through a blur of tears as she looked at the child.

"Don't ask me, dear," she said, tremulously, vaguely conscious of some hitherto unperceived need of pity. "I may not tell you. You will know all soon enough, poor child! You are too young to be told now."

"I want to see her. I want to see her," Ruth repeated, stubbornly.

But the firmness of the gentle is not to

be overcome, and Ruth received no more elucidating answer. The insistence went out of her face at last, and she returned to the window, sitting there in a submissive, patient way that lulled Miss Murray's disquiet to rest.

Shortly afterward Ellen disappeared, and Ruth rightly guessed that she had been dismissed as a warning to the household against further indiscretions. The child apparently took no notice, but despair seized upon her. She grew thinner, whiter, stiller. The desire to see her mother was eating up her soul.

In the extremity of her need a daring scheme shaped itself in her quickened brain. The maid who took Ellen's place was a kindly, light-hearted girl, and Ruth, in pursuance of her ends, began to make friends with her in a covert, shy way, to which the maid responded with easy good nature, soon coming to feel a genuine liking for the reserved, odd child who thus singled her out for favor. And so Ruth craftily matured her plan.

"Aggie," she said one night, as the maid was putting her to bed in her lonely little room, "isn't to-morrow your evening out?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know, Miss. To see some friends, maybe."

Ruth looked at her with troubled, unchildlike eyes.

"Do you know where the opera-house is, Aggie?"

"Certainly, Miss. 'Tisn't so far from here. I've passed it often."

"Did you ever go there at night, Aggie? Did you ever stand outside and watch the people go in and out? Did you?"

"Why, no, Miss, I can't say as I have."

Ruth had tight hold of the girl's arm. A suppressed excitement had taken the place of her usual apathy.

"Aggie, you must take me there tomorrow night. There is to be a new opera. I heard Miss Murray say so. She said everybody would be there."

"But, Miss Ruth—" began the girl, protestingly.

The child shook her by the arm in her frenzy of desire.

"You are not to say anything to anybody, Aggie, or they would not let me go. But we can just slip out after

I have said good-night, and nobody will know, and you can take the latch-key to let us in when we come back. Oh, don't say no, Aggie! Don't! *Don't!* I want to go so much! I *must* go, and nobody else would take me if I asked."

The maid stood aghast at the audacity of the proposition.

"But I couldn't take you out at night like that, Miss Ruth! I should lose my place the minute it come to be known, and good enough for me, too, if I did. You know I can't, dear. You must see I can't, or, indeed, I wouldn't want no praying."

Ruth pressed close. Her agony of longing was like an outgoing, compelling force.

"Aggie, you must! *You must!* Where's the harm? I only want to see all the pretty ladies in their fine gowns and gay cloaks, and the carriages hurrying up, and the horses jumping and kicking, and everybody shouting and calling. You never saw anything like it, Aggie! I heard somebody tell Harry once. We will just stand close by the door a tiny little bit of a while, and nobody will ever know we have been. Oh, Aggie!" she suddenly threw her frail arms chokingly around the girl's neck, and her voice broke into a childish, tearful, irresistible quaver. "Oh, Aggie, *darling*, I never wanted to do anything so much in all my whole life! Take me! Take me! If you do, I will love you as long as I live! *I will love you with all my heart and soul!*"

The girl hesitated, frightened yet fascinated at the bold idea. She was thoughtless and lively, eager to please and easily led, and she saw no risk to the child in the proposed escapade. And if Miss Ruth really wanted a bit of a frolic so much—

Thus it happened that on the following night little Ruth found herself on the streets of the huge city, with only a foolish young nursemaid for protector. It was an altogether new world to the child—a world full of distortions, dangers, and alarms. All the familiar landmarks were obliterated. Everything was changed. The houses were taller and wider, and closed in before her crushingly. What lurking horrors might not spring out upon her from any one of their dark vestibules! It was like walking through a lane lined with Jack-in-the-boxes. The electric lights

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glared at her savagely, with great angry eyes through monstrous radiating lashes. A deadly terror was upon her. But her purpose was stronger than her fear, and she kept on her way by Aggie's side, no sound of fright escaping her, not even when she was nearly run over by a cab, nor yet again when—more terrifying still—a policeman seized her and swung her over a puddle at a street-crossing.

So much time had been consumed in securing an unobserved exit from her home that when they reached the opera-house it was already late, and there was nothing to be seen except rows of waiting carriages and dawdling footmen.

Ruth rallied from her disappointment as soon as its cause had been explained to her.

"We will go to see your friends, Aggie," she said, with quick decision. "You needn't mind taking me along. Then we will come back when the opera is out. It is sure to be best fun of all when the opera lets out."

And again Aggie yielded. It would be a shame for the child to miss what she had come for.

Two hours later they stood in the midst of a dense throng at the doors of the vast building. The evening was turned damp and chilly, and the wind blew in rude gusts down the avenue. But the scene was all that Ruth had depicted, and more, and Aggie became instantly an absorbed spectator.

"Nearer, Aggie! Nearer!" the child whispered, excitedly. "I must see them all. I mustn't miss any!"

She tugged at the maid's sleeve, her eyes hunting hungrily through the crowd. What if she had not come!

The people streamed out. Aggie and her charge were pushed mercilessly to one side. The child's heart beat to suffocation. What if she were there, and she should miss seeing her! She gave a sobbing cry.

"I can't see, Aggie! Oh, I can't see!"

It had begun to snow. The wind lifted the awnings, and the wet flakes blew in under. Ruth felt cold, moist touches on her face and neck. Her feet and hands were ice. She shivered, and big despairing tears welled over on her cheeks.

Then suddenly the crowd parted, and she saw her mother standing at the foot

of the steps, waiting for a pair of thoroughbreds to prance their way to the curbstone. She was holding the arm of the tall blond gentleman whom Ruth had once seen riding beside her carriage, and was talking gayly to a group of young men. An electric light blazed down full upon her. The wind turned back the edges of her ermine cloak, disclosing the splendor of the gown beneath. Oh, how bewilderingly beautiful she was! How her smile flashed! How her jewels gleamed! How the white fur about her throat set off the face above—the fair, pure, lovely face that had in it no least trace of evil!

Ruth scarcely breathed. In her ecstasy the slow, long torture of the past months was as if it had never been. Her nondescript little face was transfigured. For the moment her ineffable love made her beautiful.

But the brougham was drawing up to the sidewalk. The gentleman whom Ruth remembered was moving toward it. The lady was bowing her adieu. Now her arched foot was upon the step. In another instant she would be gone—gone, lost, forever!

"Mother! Mother! Come back!"

The cry rang out, importunate, passionate, agonized.

The lady half turned, and threw a startled glance over her shoulder at the crowd. But the gentleman hurried her into the brougham and entered after her. She sank down on the cushions, her adorable face quite pale.

"I thought—I almost thought that was Ruth's voice," she said.

"Nonsense," the gentleman answered lightly, "how could it be? Besides, it would have been Harry's voice, not Ruth's, if you had heard it. Home, John."

The footman touched his hat, sprang to the box, and the brougham whirled away through the sleet.

It was half-past eight of the evening a week later. The same lady, still more charmingly dressed, still more ravishingly beautiful, sat in her new drawing-room, an opera-cloak about her, fan and flowers lying beside her on a table. The gentleman whom Ruth had recognized stood by the mantelpiece. He took out his watch.

"Patrick is late."

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The lady glanced up with her entrancing smile.

"Yes. It is the second time. He should be dismissed."

She let the cloak drop from her shoulders, and, drawing the evening paper toward her, looked lazily down its columns. The gentleman yawned.

Suddenly she gave a wild cry, and leaped to her feet.

"George! George!"

He was at her side instantly.

"Darling, what is it?"

She clutched at his arm, pointing to an item in the paper. He bent over and read it aloud.

"On Monday, March twenty-fifth, of pneumonia, Ruth, daughter of Harold Haviland, aged ten years and nine months."

The lady fell back into the chair, white as death, twisting her hands as if in bodily pain.

"It is my child—my Ruth! He calls her only *his* daughter—do you see? But she was mine, too. Ruth! Oh, Ruth!"

She gasped as if for air, pulling at the necklace about her throat. The string broke and the great pearls rained down over her bosom. Again she wrung her hands, lifting her head with a long, con-

vulsive sob that seemed to rack her body. A new, strange look swept blightingly across her beauty.

Her companion laid his hand upon her shoulder. The change in her appalled him.

"It is a frightful shock, of course, but why should you take it quite like this?" he said, in constrained remonstrance. "You never cared for her, you know, and you were willing to give her up—to leave them both."

She was looking up at him, and all her frame cowered at his words. Yes, she had not cared, and she had been willing to leave her. The thought gripped her as in a vice, resolving every sense into a frightened consciousness of an intolerable anguish. Was this remorse? Is it in such wise that souls are born?

She dropped her face on the table speechlessly. She did not guess whose had been the cry of love and longing that a short week before had faintly stirred a response in her slumbering mother-heart. But deep down in that region so seldom entered, known to each as his true self, she knew that from henceforth the little daughter she had never loved would call to her forever from her grave to come back.

## Books of the Week

This report of current literature is supplemented by fuller reviews of such books as in the judgment of the editors are of special importance to our readers. Any of these books will be sent by the publishers of *The Outlook*, postpaid, to any address on receipt of the published price, with postage added when the price is marked "net."

**Ad Astra.** Being Selections from the Divine Comedy of Dante. Illustrated by Margaret and Helen Maitland Armstrong. R. H. Russell, New York. 9x12 in. 100 pages.

indispensable to the serious student of history, and even to the student of geography, since that latter science is of little value except in its relation to the lives of men and to the