Sketches

and

Stories

by

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A Rocket of Iron

t was one of those misty October nightfalls of the north, when the white fog creeps up from the river, and winds itself like a corpse-sheet around the black, ant-like mass of human insignificance, a cold menace from Nature to Man, till the foreboding of that irresistible fatality which will one day lay us all beneath the ice-death sits upon your breast, and stifles you, till you start up desperately crying, "Let me out, let me out!"

For an hour I had been staring through the window at that chill steam, thickening and blurring out the lines that zig-zagged through it indefinitely, pale drunken images of facts, staggering against the invulnerable vapor that walled me in—a sublimated grave marble. Were they all ghosts, those figures wandering across the white night, hardly distinguishable from the posts and pickets that wove in and out, like half-dismembered bodies writhing in pain? My own fingers were curiously numb and inert; had I, too, become a shadow?

It grew unbearable at last, the pressure of the foreboding at my heart, the sense of that on-creeping of Universal Death. I ran out of doors, impelled by the vague impulse to assert my own being, to seek relief in struggle, even though foredoomed futile—to seek warmth, fellowship, somewhere, though but with those ineffective pallors in the mist, that dissolved even while I looked at them. Once in the street, I ran on indifferently, glad to be jostled, glad of the snarling of dogs and the curses of laborers calling to one another. The penumbra of the mist, that menacing dim foreshadow, had not chilled these, then! On, on, through the alleys where human flesh was close, and when one listened one could hear breathings and many feet, drifting at last into the current that swept through the main channel of the city, and presently, whirled round in an eddy, I found myself staring through the open door of the great Iron Works. Perhaps it was the sensation of warmth that held me there first, some feeling of exhilaration and wakening defiance in the flash and swirl of the yellow flames—this, mixed with an indistinct desire to clutch at something, anything, that seemed stationary in the midst of all this that slipped and wavered and fell away . . . No, I remember now: there was something before that; there was a sound—a sound that had stopped my feet in their going, and smote me with a long shudder—a sound of hammers, beating, beating, beating a terrific hail, momentarily faster and louder, and in between a panting as of some great monster catching breath beneath the driving of that iron rain. Faster, faster—CLANG! A long reverberant shriek! The giant had rolled and shivered in his pain. Involuntarily I was drawn down into the Valley of the Sound, words muttering themselves through my lips as I passed: "Forging, forging—what are they forging there? Frankenstein makes his Monster. How the iron screams!" But I heard it no more now; I only saw!—saw the curling yellow flames, and the red, red iron that panted, and the Masters of the Hammers. How they moved there, like demons in the abyss, their

bodies swinging, their eyes tense and a-glitter, their faces covered with the gloom of the torture-chamber!

Only one face I saw, young and fair—young and very fair—whereon the gloom seemed not to settle. The skin of it was white and shining there in the midst of that black haze; over the wide forehead fell tumbling waves of thick brown hair, and two great dark eyes looked steadily into the red iron, as if they saw therein something I did not see; only now and then they were lifted, and looked away upward, as if beyond the smoke-pall they beheld a vision. Once he turned so that the rose-light cast forth his profile as a silhouette; and I shivered, it was so fine and hard! Hard with the hardness of beaten iron, and fine with the fineness of a keen chisel. Had the hammers been beating on that fair young face?

A comrade called, a sudden terrified cry. There was a wild rush, a mad stampede of feet, a horrible screech of hissing metal, and a rocket of iron shot upward toward the black roof, bursting and falling in a burning shower. Three figures lay writhing along the floor, among the leaping, demoniac sparks.

The first to lift them was the Man with the white face. He had stood still in the storm, and ran forward when the others shrank back. Now he passed by me, bearing his dying burden, and I saw no quiver upon brow or chin; only, when he laid it in the ambulance, I fancied I saw upon the delicate curved lips a line of purpose deepen, and the reflection of the iron-fire glow in the strange eyes, as if for an instant the door of a hidden furnace had been opened and smouldering coals had breathed the air. And even then he looked up!

It was all over in half an hour. There would be weeping in three little homes; and one was dead, and one would die, and one would crawl, a seared human stump, to the end of his weary days. The crowd that had gathered was gone; they would not know the Stump when it begged from them with its maimed hands, six months after, on some street corner. “Fakir” they would say, and laugh. There would be an entry on the company’s books, and a brief line in the newspapers next day. But the welding of the iron would go on, and the man who gave his easy money for it would fancy he had paid for it, not seeing the stiff figures in their graves, nor the crippled beggar, nor the broken homes.

The rocket of iron is already cold; dull, inert, fire-less, the black fragments lie upon the floor whereon they lately rained their red revenge. Do with them what you will, you cannot undo their work. The men are clearing way. Only he with the white face does not go back to his place. Still set and silent he takes his coat, “presses his soft hat down upon his thick, damp locks,” and goes out into the fog and night. So close he passed me, I might have touched him; but he never saw me. Perhaps he was still carrying the burden of the dying man upon his heart; perhaps some mightier burden. For one instant the shapely, boyish figure was in full light, then it vanished away in the engulfing mist—the mist which the vision of him had made me forget. For I knew I had seen a Man of Iron, into whose soul the iron had driven, whose nerves were tempered as cold steel, but

behind whose still, impassive features slumbered a white-hot heart. And others should see a rocket and a ruin, and feel the Vengeance of Beaten Iron, before the mist comes and swallows all.

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I had forgotten! Upon that face, that young, fair face, so smooth and fine that even the black smoke would not rest upon it, there bloomed the roses of Early Death. Hot-house flowers!

The Chain Gang

t is far, far down in the southland, and I am back again, thanks be, in the land of wind and snow, where life lives. But that was in the days when I was a wretched thing, that crept and crawled, and shrunk when the wind blew, and feared the snow. So they sent me away down there to the world of the sun, where the wind and the snow are afraid. And the sun was kind to me, and the soft air that does not move lay around me like folds of down, and the poor creeping life in me winked in the light and stared out at the wide caressing air; stared away to the north, to the land of wind and rain, where my heart was,—my heart that would be at home.

Yes, there, in the tender south, my heart was bitter and bowed, for the love of the singing wind and the frost whose edge was death,—bitter and bowed for the strength to bear that was gone, and the strength to love that abode. Day after day I climbed the hills with my face to the north and home. And there, on those southern heights, where the air was resin and balm, there smote on my ears the sound that all the wind of the north can never sing down again, the sound I shall hear till I stand at the door of the last silence.

Cling—clang—cling—From the Georgian hills it sounds; and the snow and the storm cannot drown it,—the far-off, terrible music of the Chain Gang.

I met it there on the road, face to face, with all the light of the sun upon it. Do you know what it is? Do you know that every day men run in long procession, upon the road they build for others' safe and easy going, bound to a chain? And that other men, with guns upon their shoulders, ride beside them—with orders to kill if the living links break? There it stretched before me, a serpent of human bodies, bound to the iron and wrapped in the merciless folds of justified cruelty.

Clank—clink—clank—There was an order given. The living chain divided; groups fell to work upon the road; and then I saw and heard a miracle.

Have you ever, out of a drowsy, lazy conviction that all knowledges, all arts, all dreams, are only patient sums of many toils of many millions dead and living, suddenly started into an uncanny consciousness that knowledges and arts and dreams are things more real than any living being ever was, which

suddenly reveal themselves, unasked and unawaited, in the most obscure corners of soul-life, flashing out in prismatic glory to dazzle and shock all your security of thought, toppling it with vague questions of what is reality, that you cannot silence? When you hear that an untaught child is able, he knows not how, to do the works of the magicians of mathematics, has it never seemed to you that suddenly all books were swept away, and there before you stood a superb, sphinx-like creation, Mathematics itself, posing problems to men whose eyes are cast down, and all at once, out of whim, incorporating itself in that wide-eyed, mysterious child? Have you ever felt that all the works of the masters were swept aside in the burst of a singing voice, unconscious that it sings, and that Music itself, a master-presence, has entered the throat and sung?

No, you have never felt it? But you have never heard the Chain Gang sing!

Their faces were black and brutal and hopeless; their brows were low, their jaws were heavy, their eyes were hard; three hundred years of the scorn that brands had burned its scar upon the face and form of Ignorance,—Ignorance that had sought dully, stupidly, blindly, and been answered with that pitiless brand. But wide beyond the limits of high man and his little scorn, the great, sweet old Music-Soul, the chords of the World, smote through the black man's fibre in the days of the making of men; and it sings, it sings, with its ever-thrumming strings, through all the voices of the Chain Gang. And never one so low that it does not fill with the humming vibrancy that quivers and bursts out singing things always new and new and new.

I heard it that day.

The leader struck his pick into the earth, and for a moment whistled like some wild, free, living flute in the forest. Then his voice floated out, like a low booming wind, crying an instant, and fell; there was the measure of a grave in the fall of it. Another voice rose up, and lifted the dead note aloft, like a mourner raising his beloved with a kiss. It drifted away to the hills and the sun. Then many voices rolled forward, like a great plunging wave, in a chorus never heard before, perhaps never again; for each man sung his own song as it came, yet all blent. The words were few, simple, filled with a great plaint; the wail of the sea was in it; and no man knew what his brother would sing, yet added his own without thought, as the rhythm swept on, and no voice knew what note its fellow voice would sing, yet they fell in one another as the billow falls in the trough or rolls to the crest, one upon the other, one within the other, over, under, all in the great wave; and now one led and others followed, then it dropped back and another swelled upward, and every voice was soloist and chorister, and never one seemed conscious of itself, but only to sing out the great song.

And always, as the voices rose and sank, the axes swung and fell. And the lean white face of the man with the gun looked on with a stolid, paralyzed smile.

Oh, that wild, sombre melody, that long, appealing plaint, with its hope laid beyond death,—that melody that was made only there, just now, before me, and passing away before me! If I could only seize it, hold it, stop it from passing! that all the world might hear the song of the Chain Gang! might know that here, in these red Georgian hills, convicts, black, brutal convicts, are making the music that is of no man's compelling, that floods like the tide and ebbs away like the tide, and will not be held—and is gone, far away and forever, out into the abyss where the voices of the centuries have drifted and are lost!

Something about Jesus, and a Lamp in the darkness—a gulfing darkness. Oh, in the mass of sunshine must they still cry for light? All around the sweep and the glory of shimmering ether, sun, sun, a world of sun, and these still calling for light! Sun for the road, sun for the stones, sun for the red clay—and no light for this dark living clay? Only heat that burns and blaze that blinds, but does not lift the darkness!

"And lead me to that Lamp—"

The pathetic prayer for light went trembling away put into the luminous gulf of day, and the axes swung and fell; and the grim dry face of the man with the gun looked on with its frozen smile. "So long as they sing, they work," said the smile, still and ironical.

"A friend to them that's got no friend"—Man of Sorrows, lifted up upon Golgotha, in the day when the forces of the Law and the might of Social Order set you there, in the moment of your pain and desperate accusation against Heaven, when that piercing "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" went up to a deaf sky, did you presage this desolate appeal coming to you out of the unlived depths of nineteen hundred years?

Hopeless hope, that cries to the dead! Futile pleading that the cup may pass, while still the lips drink! For, as of old, Order and the Law, in shining helmets and gleaming spears, ringed round the felon of Golgotha, so stand they still in that lean, merciless figure, with its shouldered gun and passive smile. And the moan that died within the Place of Skulls is born again in this great dark cry rising up against the sun.

If but the living might hear it, not the dead! For these are dead who walk about with vengeance and despite within their hearts, and scorn for things dark and lowly, in the odor of self-righteousness, with self-vaunting wisdom in their souls, and pride of race, and iron-shod order, and the preservation of Things that Are; walking stones are these, that cannot hear. But the living are those who seek to know, who wot not of things lowly or things high, but only of things wonderful; and who turn sorrowfully from Things that Are, hoping for Things that May Be. If these should hear the Chain Gang chorus, seize it, make all the living hear it, see it!

If, from among themselves, one man might find "the Lamp," lift it up! Paint for all the world these Georgian hills, these red, sunburned roads, these toiling figures with their rhythmic axes, these brutal, unillumined faces, dull, groping,

depth-covered,—and then unloose that song upon their ears, till they feel the smitten, quivering hearts of the Sons of Music beating against their own; and under and over and around it, the chain that the dead have forged clinking between the heart-beats!

Clang—cling—clang—ng—It is sundown. They are running over the red road now. The voices are silent; only the chain clinks.

The Heart of Angiolillo

Some women are born to love stories as the sparks fly upward. You see it every time they glance at you, and you feel it every time they lay a finger on your sleeve. There was a party the other night, and a four-year old baby who couldn't sleep for the noise crept down into the parlor half frightened to death and transfixed with wonderment at the crude performances of an obtuse visitor who was shouting out the woes of Othello. One kindly little woman took the baby in her arms and said: "What would they do to you, if you made all that noise."—"Whip me," whispered the child, her round black eyes half admiration and half terror, and altogether coquettish, as she hid and peered round the woman's neck. And every man in the room forthwith fell in love with her, and wanted to smother his face in the bewitching rings of dark hair that crowned the dainty head, and carry her about on his shoulders, or get down on his hands and knees to play horse for her, or let her walk on his neck, or obliterate his dignity in any other way she might prefer. The boys tolerated their fathers with a superior "huh!" Fourteen or fifteen years from now they will be playing the humble cousin of the horse before the same little ringed-haired lady, and having sported Nick Bottom's ears to no purpose, half a dozen or so will go off and hang themselves, or turn monk, or become "bold, bad men," and revenge themselves on the sex. But her conquests will go on, and when those gracious rings are white as snow the children of those boys will follow in their grandfathers' and fathers' steps and dangle after her, and make drawings on their fly leaves of that sweet kiss-cup of a mouth of hers, and call her their elder sister, and other devotional names. And the other girls of her generation, who were not born with that marvelous entangling grace in every line and look, will dread her and spite her, and feel mean satisfaction when some poor fool does swallow laudanum on her account. Smiles of glacial virtue will creep over their faces like slippery sunshine, when one by one her devotees come trailing off to them to say that such a woman could never fill a man's heart nor become the ornament of his hearthstone; the quiet virtues that wear, are all their desire; of course they have just been studying her character and that of the foolish men who dance her attendance, but even those are not doing it with any serious motives. And the neglected girls will serve him with home-made cake

and wine which he will presently convert into agony in that pearl shell ear of hers. And all the while the baby will have done nothing but be what she was born to be through none of her own choosing, which is her lot and portion; and that is another thing the gods will have to explain when the day comes that they go on trial before men; which is the real day of judgment.

But this isn't the baby's story, which has yet to be made, but the story of one who somehow received a wrong portion. Some inadvertent little angel in the destiny shop took down her name when the heroine of a romance was called for, and put her where she shouldn't have been, and then ran off to play no doubt, not stopping to look twice. For even the most insouciant angel that looked twice would have seen that Effie was no woman to play the game of hearts, and there's only one thing more undiscerning than an angel, and that is a social reformer. Effie ran up against both.

They say she had blood in her girlhood, that it shone red and steady through that thin, pure skin of hers; but when I saw her, with her nursing baby in her arms, down in the smutching grime of London, there was only a fluctuant blush, a sort of pink ghost of blood, hovering back and forth on her face. And that was for shame of the poverty of her neat bare room. Not that she had ever known riches. She was the daughter of Scotch peasants, and had gone out to service when she was still a child; her chest was hollowed in and her back bowed with that unnatural labor. There was no gloss on the pale sandy hair, no wilding tendrils clinging round the straight smooth forehead, no light of coquetry or grace in the glimmering blue eyes, no beauty in her at all, unless it lay in the fine, hard sculptured line of her nose and mouth and chin when she turned her head sideways. You could read in that line that having spoken a word to her heart, she would not forget it nor unsay it; and if he took her down into Gethsemane, she would never cry out though by all forsaken.

And that was where it had taken her then. Some ready condemner of all that has been tried for less than a thousand years, will say it was because she had the just reward of those who, holding that love is its own sanction and that it cannot be anything but degraded by seeking permissions from social authorities, live their love lives without the consent of Church and State. But you and I know that the same dark garden has awaited the woman whose love has been blessed by both, and that many such a life lamp has flickered out in a night as profound as poverty and utter loneliness could make it. So if it was justice to Effie, what is it to that other woman? In truth, justice had nothing to do with it; she loved the wrong man, that was all; and married or unmarried, it would have been the same, for a formula doesn't make a man, nor the lack of it unmake him. The fellow was superior in intellect. It is honesty only which can wring so much from those who knew them both, for as to any other thing she sat as high over him as the stars are. Not that he was an actively bad man; just one of those weak, uncertain, tumbling about characters, having sense enough to know it is a fine thing to stand alone, and vanity enough to want the name

without the game, and cowardice enough to creep around anything stronger than itself, and hang there, and spread itself about, and say, "Lo, how straight am I!" And if the stronger thing happens to be a father or a brother or some such tolerant piece of friendly, self-sufficient energy, he amuses himself awhile, and finally gives the creeper a shake and says, "Here, now, go hang on somebody else if you can't stand alone", and the world says he should have done it before. But if it happens to be a mother or a sister or a wife or a sweetheart, she encourages him to think he is a wonderful person, that all she does is really his own merit, and she is proud and glad to serve him. If after a while she doesn't exactly believe it any more, she says and does the same; and the world says she is a fool,—which she is. But if, in some sudden spurt of masculine self-assertiveness, she decides to fling him off, the world says she is an unwomanly woman,—which again she is; so much the better.

Effie's creeper dabbled in literature. He wanted to be a translator and several other things. His appearance was mild and gentlemanly, even super-modest. He always spoke respectfully of Effie, and as if momentously impressed with a sense of duty towards her. They had started out to realize the free life together, and the glory of the new ideal had beckoned them forward. So no doubt he believed, for a pretender always deceives himself worse than anybody else. But still, at that particular period, he used to droop his head wearily and admit that he had made a great mistake. It was nobody's fault but his own, but of course—Effie and he were hardly fitted for each other. She could not well enter into his hopes and ambitions, never having had the opportunity to develop when she was younger. He had hoped to stimulate her in that direction, but he feared it was too late. So he said in a delicate and gentlemanly way, as he went from one house to the other, and was invited to dinner and supper and made himself believe he was looking for work. Effie, meanwhile, was taking home boys' caps to make, and worrying along incredibly on bread and tea, and walking the streets with the baby in her arms when she had no caps to make.

Of course when a man drinks other people's teas a great many times, and sits in their houses, and borrows odd shirtings now and then, and assumes the gentleman, he is ultimately brought to the necessity of asking some one to tea with him; so one spring night the creeper approached Effie rather dubiously with the statement that he had asked two or three acquaintances to come in the next evening, and he supposed she would need to prepare tea. The girl was just fainting from starvation then, and she asked him wearily where he thought she was to get it. He cast about a while in his pusillanimous way for things that she might do, and finally proposed that she pawn the baby's dress,—the white dress she had made from one of her own girlhood dresses, and the only thing it had to wear when she took it out for air. That was the limit, even for Effie. She said she would take anything of her own if she had it, but not the baby's; and she turned her face to the wall and clung to the child.

When the tea-time came next day she went out with the baby and walked up and down the surging London streets looking in the windows and crushing back tears. What the creeper did with his guests she never knew, for she did not return till long after dusk, when she was too weary to wander any more, and she found no one there but himself and a dark stranger, who spoke little and with an Italian accent, but who measured her with serious, intense eyes. He listened to the creeper, but he looked at her; she was quite fagged out and more bloodless than ever as she sat motionless on the edge of the bed. When he went away he lifted his hat to her with the grace of an old time courtier, and begged her pardon if he had intruded. Some days after that he came in again, and brought a toy for the baby, and asked her if he might carry the child out a little for her; it looked sickly shut up there, but he knew it must be heavy for her to carry. The creeper suddenly discovered that he could carry the baby.

All this happened in the days when a pious queen sat on the throne of Spain. With eyes turned upward in much holiness, she failed to see the things done in her prisons, or hear the groans that rose up from the "zero" chamber in the fortress of Montjuich, though all Europe heard, and even in America the echo rang. While she told her beads her minister gave the order to "torture the Anarchists;" and scarred with red-hot irons, maimed and deformed and maddened with the nameless horrors that the good devise to correct the bad, even unto this day the evidences of that infamous order live. But two men do not live,—the one who gave the order, and the one who revenged it.

It happened one night, in April, that Effie and the creeper and their sometime visitor met all three in one of those long low smothering London halls where many movements have originated, which in their developed proportions have taken possession of the House of Commons, and even stirred the dust in the House of Lords. There was a crowd of excited people talking all degrees of sense and nonsense in every language of the continent. Letters smuggled from the prison had been received; new tales of torture were passing from mouth to mouth; fresh propositions to arouse a general protest from civilization were bubbling up with the anger of every indignant man and woman. Drifting to the buzzing knots Effie heard some one translating: it was the letter of the tortured Nogués, who a month later was shot beneath the fortress wall. The words smote her ears like something hot and stinging:

"You know I am one of the three accusers (the other two are Ascheri and Molas) who figure in the trial. I could not bear the atrocious tortures of so many days. On my arrest I spent eight days without food or drink, obliged to walk continually to and fro or be flogged; and as if that did not suffice, I was made to trot as though I were a horse trained at the riding school, until worn with fatigue I fell to the ground. Then the hangmen burnt my lips with red-hot irons, and when I declared myself the author of the attempt they replied, 'You do not tell the truth. We know that the author is another one, but we want to know

your accomplices. Besides you still retain six bombs, and along with little Oiler you deposited two bombs in the Rue Fivaller. Who are your accomplices?

"In spite of my desire to make an end of it I could not answer anything. Whom should I accuse since all are innocent? Finally six comrades were placed before me, whom I had to accuse, and of whom I beg pardon. Thus the declarations and the accusations that I made. . . I cannot finish; the hangmen are coming.

Nogués."

Sick with horror Effie would have gone away, but her feet were like lead. She heard the next letter, the pathetic prayer of Sebastian Sunyer, indistinctly; the tortures had already seared her ears, but the crying for help seemed to go up over her head like great sobs; she felt herself washed round, sinking, in the desperate pain of it. The piteous reiteration, "Listen you with your honest hearts," "you with your pure souls," "good and right-minded people," "good and right-feeling people," wailed through her like the wild pleading of a child who, shrieking under the whip "Dear papa, good, sweet papa, please don't whip me, please, please," seeks terror-wrung flattery to escape the lash. The last cry, "Aid us in our helplessness; think of our misery," made her quiver like a reed. She walked away and sat down in a corner alone; what could she do, what could any one do? Miserable creature that she was herself, her own misery seemed so worthless beside that prison cry. And she thought on, "Why does he want to live at all, why does any one want to live, why do I want to live myself?"

After a while the creeper and his friend came to her, and the latter sat down beside her, undemonstrative as usual. At the next buzz in the room they two were left alone. She looked at him once as she said, "What do you think the people will do about it?"

He glanced at the crowd with a thin smile: "Do? Talk."

In a little time he said quietly: "It does you no good here. I will take you home and come back for David afterward." She had no idea of contradicting him; so they went out together. At the threshold of her room he said firmly, "I will come in for a few minutes; I have to speak to you."

She struck a light, put the baby on the bed, and looked at him questioningly. He had sat down with his back against the wall, and with rigidly folded arms stared straight ahead of him. Seeing that he did not speak, she said softly, falling into her native dialect, as all Scotch women do when they feel most: "I canna get thae poor creetyer's cries oot o' ma head. It's no human."

"No," he said shortly, and then with a sudden look at her, "Effie, what do you think love is?"

She answered him with surprised eyes and said nothing. He went on: "You love the child, don't you? You do for it, you serve it. That shows you love it. But do you think it's love that makes David act as he does to you? If he loved you, would he let you work as you work? Would he live off you? Wouldn't he wear the

flesh off his fingers instead of yours? He doesn't love you. He isn't worth you. He isn't a bad man, but he isn't worth you. And you make him less worth. You ruin him, you ruin yourself, you kill the child. I can't see it any more. I come here, and I see you weaker every time, whiter, thinner. And I know if you keep on you'll die. I can't see it. I want you to leave him; let me work for you. I don't make much, but enough to let you rest. At least till you are well. I would wait till you left him of yourself, but I can't wait when I see you dying like this. I don't want anything of you, except to serve you, to serve the child because it's yours. Come away, to-night. You can have my room; I'll go somewhere else. To-morrow I'll find you a better place. You needn't see him any more. I'll tell him myself. He won't do anything, don't be afraid. Come." And he stood up.

Effie had sat astonished and dumb. Now she looked up at the dark tense eyes above her, and said quietly, "I dinna understand."

A sharp contraction went across the strong bent face: "No? You don't understand what you are doing with yourself? You don't understand that I love you, and I can't see it? I don't ask you to love me; I ask you to let me serve you. Only a little, only so much as to give you health again; is that too much? You don't know what you are to me. Others love beauty, but I—I see in you the eternal sacrifice; your thin fingers that always work, your face—when I look at it, it's just a white shadow; you are the child of the people, that dies without crying. Oh, let me give myself for you. And leave this man, who doesn't care for you, doesn't know you, thinks you beneath him, uses you. I don't want you to be his slave any more."

Effie clasped her hands and looked at them; then she looked at the sleeping baby, smoothed the quilt, and said quietly: "I didna take him the day to leave him the morra. It's no my fault if ye're daft aboot me."

The dark face sharpened as one sees the agony in a' dying man, but his voice was very gentle, speaking always in his blurred English: "No, there is no fault in you at all. Did I accuse you?"

The girl walked to the window and looked out. Some way it was a relief from the burning eyes which seemed to fill the room, no matter that she did not look at them. And staring off into the twinkling London night, she heard again the terrible sobs of Sebastian Sunyer's letter rising up and drowning her with its misery. Without turning around she said, low and hard, "I wonder ye can thenk aboot thae things, an' yon deils burnin' men alive."

The man drew his hand across his forehead. "Would you like to hear that they,—one,—the worst of them, was dead?"

"I thenk the worl' wadna be muckle the waur o't," she answered, still looking away from him. He came up and laid his hand on her shoulder. "Will you kiss me once? I'll never ask again." She shook him off: "I dinna feel for't." "Good-bye then. I'll go back for David." And he returned to the hall and got the creeper and told him very honestly what had taken place; and the creeper, to his credit be it said, respected him for it, and talked a great deal about being better in

future to the girl. The two men parted at the foot of the stairs, and the last words that echoed through the hallway were: "No, I am going away. But you will hear of me some day."

Now, what went on in his heart that night no one knows; nor what indecision still kept him lingering fitfully about Effie's street a few days more; nor when the indecision finally ceased; for no one spoke to him after that, except as casual acquaintances meet, and in a week he was gone. But what he did the whole world knows; for even the Queen of Spain came out of her prayers to hear how her torturing prime minister had been shot at Santa Agueda, by a stern-faced man, who, when the widow, grief-mad, spit in his face, quietly wiped his cheek, saying, "Madam, I have no quarrel with women." A few weeks later they garrotted him, and he said one word before he died,—one only, "Germinal."

Over there in the long low London hall the gabbling was hushed, and some one murmured how he had sat silent in the corner that night when all were talking. The creeper passed round a book containing the history of the tortures, watching it jealously all the while, for said he, "Angiolillo gave it to me himself; he had it in his own hands."

Effie lay beside the baby in her room, and hid her face hi the pillow to keep out the stare of the burning eyes that were dead; and over and over again she repeated, "Was it my fault, was it my fault?" The hot summer air lay still and smothering, and the immense murmur of the city came muffled like thunder below the horizon. Her heart seemed beating against the walls of a padded room. And gradually, without losing consciousness, she slipped into the world of illusion; around her grew the stifling atmosphere of the torture-chamber of Montjuich, and the choked cries of men in agony. She was sure that if she looked up she should see the demoniac face of Portas, the torturer. She tried to cry, "Mercy, mercy," but her dry lips clave. She had a whirling sensation, and the illusion changed; now there was the clank of soldiers' arms, a moment of insufferable stillness as the garrotte shaped itself out of the shadows in her eyes, then loud and clear, breaking the sullen quiet like the sharp ringing of a storm-bringing wind, "Germinal." She sprang up: the long vibration of the bell of St. Pancras was waving through the room; but to her it was the prolongation of the word, "Germ-inal-l-l—germ-inal-l-l—" Then suddenly she threw out her arms in the darkness, and whispered hoarsely, "Ay, I'll kiss ye the noo."

An hour later she was back at the old question, "Was it my fault?"

Poor girl, it is all over now, and all the same to the grass that roots in her bone, whether it was her fault or not. For the end that the man who had loved her foresaw, came, though it was slow in the coming. Let the creeper get credit for all that he did. He stiffened up in a year or so, and went to Paris and got some work; and there the worn little creature went to him, and wrote to her old friends that she was better off at last. But it was too late for that thin shell of a body that had starved so much; at the first trial she broke and died. And so she sleeps and is forgotten. And the careless boy-angel who mixed all these destinies

up so unobservantly has never yet whispered her name in the ear of the widowed Lady Canovas del Castillo.

Nor will the birds that fly thither carry it now; for it was not "Effie."

The Reward of an Apostate

have sinned: and I am rewarded according to my sin, which was great. There is no forgiveness for me; let no man think there is forgiveness for sin: the gods cannot forgive.

This was my sin, and this is my punishment, that I forsook my god to follow a stranger—only a while, a very brief, brief while—and when I would have returned there was no more returning. I cannot worship any more,—that is my punishment; I cannot worship any more.

Oh, that my god will none of me? That is an old sorrow! My god was Beauty, and I am all unbeautiful, and ever was. There is no grace in these harsh limbs of mine, nor was at any time. I, to whom the glory of a lit eye was as the shining of stars in a deep well, have only dull and faded eyes, and always had; the chiseled lip and chin whereover runs the radiance of life in bubbling gleams, the cup of living wine was never mine to taste or kiss. I am earth-colored, and for my own ugliness sit in the shadow, that the sunlight may not see me, nor the beloved of my god. But, once, in my hidden corner, behind the curtain of shadows, I blinked at the glory of the world, and had such joy of it as only the ugly know, sitting silent and worshiping, forgetting themselves and forgotten. Here in my brain it glowed, the shimmering of the dying sun upon the shore, the long gold line between the sand and sea, where the sliding foam caught fire and burned to death. Here in my brain it shone, the white moon on the wrinkling river, running away, a dancing ghost line in the illimitable night. Here in my brain rose the mountain curves, the great still world of stone, summit upon summit sweeping skyward, lonely and conquering. Here in my brain, my little brain, behind this tiny ugly wall of bone stretched over with its dirty yellow skin, glittered the far high blue desert with its sand of stars, as I have watched it, nights and nights, alone, hid in the shadows of the prairie grass. Here rolled and swelled the seas of corn, and blossoming fields of nodding bloom; and flower-flies on their hovering wings went flickering up and down. And the quick spring of lithe-limbed things went scattering dew across the sun; and singing streams went shining down the rocks, spreading bright veils upon the crags.

Here in my brain, my silent unrevealing brain, were the eyes I loved, the lips I dared not kiss, the sculptured heads and tendriled hair. They were here always in my wonder-house, my house of Beauty, the temple of my god. I shut the door on common life and worshiped here. And no bright, living, flying thing,

in whose body Beauty dwells as guest, can guess the ecstatic joy of a brown, silent creature, a toad-thing, squatting on the shadowed ground, self-blotted, motionless, thrilling with the presence of All-Beauty, though it has no part therein.

But the gods are many. And once a strange god came to me. Sharp upon the shadowy ground he stood, and beckoned me with knotted fingers. There was no beauty in his lean figure and sunken cheeks; but up and down the muscles ran like snakes beneath his skin, and his dark eyes had somber fires in them. And as I looked at him, I felt the leap of prisoned forces in myself, in the earth, in the air, in the sun; all throbbed with the pulse of the wild god's heart. Beauty vanished from my wonder-house; and where his images had been I heard the clang and roar of machinery, the forging of links that stretched to the sun, chains for the tides, chains for the winds; and curious lights went shining through thick walls as through air, and down through the shell of the world itself, to the great furnaces within. Into those seething depths, the god's eyes peered, smiling and triumphing; then with an up-glance at the sky and a waste-glance at me, he strode off.

This is my great sin, for which there is no pardon: I followed him, the rude god Energy; followed him, and in that abandoned moment swore to be quit of Beauty, which had given me nothing, and to be worshiper of him to whom I was akin, ugly but sinuous, resolute, daring, defiant, maker and breaker of things, remoulder of the world. I followed him, I would have run abreast with him; I loved him, not with that still ecstasy of flooding joy wherewith my own god filled me of old, but with impetuous, eager fires, that burned and beat through all the blood-threads of me. "I love you, love me back," I cried, and would have flung myself upon his neck. Then he turned on me with a ruthless blow, and fled away over the world, leaving me crippled, stricken, powerless, a fierce pain driving through my veins—gusts of pain!—And I crept back into my old cavern, stumbling, blind and deaf, only for the haunting vision of my shame and the rushing sound of fevered blood.

The pain is gone. I see again; I care no more for the taunt and blow of that fierce god who was never mine. But in my wonder-house it is all still and bare; no image lingers on the blank mirrors any more. No singing bell floats in the echoless dome. Forms rise and pass; but neither mountain curve nor sand nor sea, nor shivering river, nor the faces of the flowers, nor flowering faces of my god's beloved, touch aught within me now. Not one poor thrill of vague delight for me, who felt the glory of the stars within my finger tips. It slips past me like water. Brown without and clay within! No wonder now behind the ugly wall; an empty temple! I cannot worship, I cannot love, I cannot care. All my life-service is unweighed against that faithless hour of my forswearing.

It is just; it is the Law; I am forsworn, and the gods have given me the Reward of An Apostate.

At the End of the Alley

It is a long narrow pocket opening on a little street which runs like a tortuous seam up and down the city, over there. It was at the end of the summer; and in summer, in the evening, the mouth of the pocket is hard to find, because of the people, in it and about, who sit across the passage, gasping at the dirty winds that come loafing down the street like crafty beggars seeking a hole to sleep in—like mean beggars, bereft of the spirit of free windhood. Down in the pocket itself the air is quite dead; one feels oneself enveloped in a scum-covered pool of it, and at every breath long filaments of invisible roots, swamp-roots, tear and tangle in your floundering lungs.

I had to go to the very end, to the bottom of the pocket. There, in the deepest of these alley-holes, lives the woman to whom I am indebted for the whiteness of this waist I wear. How she does it, I don't know; poverty works miracles like that, just as the black marsh mud gives out lilies.

At the very last door I knocked, and presently a man's voice, weak and suffocated, called from a window above. I explained.—"There's a chair there; sit down. She'll be home soon." And the voice was caught in a cough

This, then, was the consumptive husband she had told me of! I looked up at the square hole dimly outlined in the darkness, whence the cough issued, and suddenly felt a horrible pressure at my heart and a curious sense of entanglement, as if all the invisible webs of disease had momentarily acquired a conscious sense of prey within their clutch, and tightened on it like an octopus. The haunting terror of the unknown, the dim horror of an inimic Presence, recoil before the merciless creeping and floating of an enemy one cannot grasp or fight, repulsive turning from a Thing that has reached behind while you have been seeking to face it, that is there awaiting you with the frightful ironic laughter of the Silence—all this swept round and through me as I stared up through the night.

Up there on the bed he was lying, he who had been meshed in the fatal web for three long years—and was struggling still! In the darkness I felt his breath draw.

The sharp barking of a dog came as a relief. I turned to the broken chair, and sat down to wait. The alley was hemmed in by a high wall, and from the farther side of it there towered up four magnificent old trees, whose great crowns sent down a whispering legend of vanished forests and the limitless sweep of clean air that had washed through them, long ago, and that would never come again. How long, how long since those far days of purity, before the plague spot of Man had crept upon them! How strong those proud old giants were that had not yet been strangled! How beautiful they were! How mean and ugly were the misshapen things that sat in the doorways of the foul dens that they had made, chattering, chattering, as ages ago the apes had chattered in the

forest! What curious beasts they were, with their paws and heads sticking out of the coverings they had twisted round their bodies—chattering, chattering always, and always moving about, unable to understand the still strong growths of silence.

So a half hour passed.

At last I saw a parting in the group of bodies across the entrance of the pocket, and a familiar weary figure carrying a basket, coming down the brickway. She stopped half way where a widening of the alley furnished the common drying place, and a number of clothes lines crossed and recrossed each other, casting a net of shadows on the pavement; after a glance at the sky, which had clouded over, she sighed heavily and again advanced. In the sickly light of the alley lamp the rounded shoulders seemed to droop like an old crone's. Yet the woman was still young. That she might not be startled, I called "Good evening."

The answer was spoken in that tone of forced cheerfulness which the wretched always give to their employers; but she sank upon the step with the habitual "My, but I'm glad to sit down," of one who seldom sits.

"Tired out, I suppose. The day has been so hot."

"Yes, and I've got to go to work and iron again till eleven o'clock, and it's awful hot in that kitchen. I don't mind the washing so much in summer; I wash out here. But it's hot ironing. Are you in a hurry?"

I said no, and sat on. "How much rent do you pay?" I asked.

"Seven dollars."

"Three rooms?"

"Yes."

"One over the other?"

"Yes. It's an awful rent, and he won't fix anything. The door is half off its hinges, and the paper is a sight."

"Have you lived here long?"

"Over three years. We moved here before he got sick. I don't keep nothing right now, but it used to be nice. It's so quiet back here away from the street; you don't hear no noise. That fence ought to be whitewashed. I used to keep it white, and everything clean. And it was so nice to sit out here in summer under them trees. You could just think you were in the park."

A curious wonder went through me. Somewhere back in me a voice was saying, "To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, it shall be taken away even that which he hath." This horrible pool had been "nice" to her! Again I felt the abyss seizing me with its tentacles, and high overhead in the tree-crowns I seemed to hear a spectral mockery of laughter.

"Yes," I forced myself to say, "they are splendid trees. I wonder they have lived so long."

"'Tis funny, aint it? That's a great big yard in there; the man that used to own it was a gardener, and there's a lot of the curiousest flowers there yet. But

he's dead now, and the folks that's got it don't keep up nothing. They're waiting to sell it, I suppose."

Above, over our heads, the racking cough sounded again. "Aint it terrible?" she murmured. "Day and night, day and night; he don't get no rest, and neither do I. It's no wonder some people commits suicide."

"Does he ever speak of it?" I asked. Her voice dropped to a semi-whisper. "Not now so much, since the church people's got hold of him. He used to; I think he'd a done it if it hadn't been for them. But they've been kind o' talkin' to him lately, and tellin' him it wouldn't be right,—on account of the insurance, you know."

My heart gave a wild bound of revolt, and I shut my teeth fast. O man, man, what have you made of yourself ! More stupid than all the beasts of the earth, for a dole of the things you make to be robbed of, living,—to be robbed of and poisoned with—you consent to the death that eats with a million mouths, eats inexorably. You submit to unnamable torture in the holy name of—Insurance! And in the name of Insurance this miserable woman keeps alive the bones of a man!

I took my bundle and went. And all the way I felt myself tearing through the tendrils of death that hung and swayed from the noisome wall, and caught at things as they passed. And all the way there pressed upon me pictures of the skeleton and the woman, clothed in firm flesh, young and joyous, and thrilling with the love of the well and strong. Ah, if some one had said to her then, "Some day you will slave to keep him alive through fruitless agonies, that for your last reward you may take the price of his pain"!

II.—ALONE

I was wrong. I thought she wanted the insurance money, but I misunderstood her. I found it out one wild October day more than a year later, when for the second time I sought the end of the alley.

The sufferer had "suffered out"; the gaunt and wasted shell of the man lay no more by the window in the upper story. The woman was free. "Rest at last," I thought, "for both of them."

But it was not as I thought.

I expected ease to come into the woman's drawn face, and relaxation to her stooping figure. But something else came upon both, something quite unwonted and inexplicable; a wandering look in the eyes, a stupid drop to the mouth, an uncertainty in her walk, as of one who is half minded to go back and look for something. There was, too, an irritating irregularity in the performance of her work, which began to be annoying.

At last, on that October day, this new unreliability reached the limit of provocation. I was leaving the city; I needed my laundry, needed it at once; and here it was four o'clock in the afternoon, the train due at night, and packing impossible till the wash came. It was five days overdue.

The wind was howling furiously, the rain driving in sheets, but there was no alternative; I must get to the "End of the Alley" and back, somehow.

The gray, rain-drenched atmosphere was still grayer in the alley,—still, still grayer at the end. And what with the gray of it and the rain of it, I could scarcely see the thing that sat facing me when I opened the door,—a sort of human blur, hunched in a rocking-chair, its head sunken on its breast.

In response to my startled exclamation, the face was lifted vacantly for a second, and then dropped again. But I had seen: drunk, dead drunk!

And this woman had never drunk.

I looked around the wretched room. By the window, where the gray light trailed in, stood a table covered with unwashed dishes; some late flies were crawling in the gutters of slop, besotted derelicts of insects, stupidly staggering up and down the cracked china. On the stove stood a number of flat-irons, but there was no fire. A mass of unironed clothes lay on an old couch and over the backs of two unoccupied chairs. On the wall above the couch, hung the portrait of the dead man.

I walked to the slumping figure in the rocker, and with ill-contained brutality demanded: "So this is why you did not bring my clothes! Where are they?"

I heard my own voice cutting like the edge of a knife, and felt half-ashamed when that weak, shaking thing lifted up its foolish face, and stared at me with watery, uncomprehending eyes.

"My clothes," I reiterated; "are they here or upstairs?"

"Guess-s-so," stammered the uncertain voice, "*g*-guess so."

"Nothing for it but to find them myself," I muttered, beginning the search through the pile on the couch. Nothing of mine there, so I needs must climb to the Golgotha on the second floor, from which the Cross had disappeared, but which still bore traces of its victim's long crucifixion,—a pair of old bed-slippers still by the window, a sleeping-cap on the wall. Some cannot but leave so the things that have touched their dead.

One by one I found the "rough-dry" garments, here, there, in the hall-way, in the garret, hanging or crumpled up among dozens of others. And all the while I hunted, the rain beat and the wind blew, and a low third sound kept mingling with them, rising from the lower floor. My heart smote me when I heard it, for I knew it was the woman sobbing. The self-righteous Pharisee within me gave an impatient sneer: "Alcohol tears!" But something else clutched at my throat, and I found myself glancing at the dead man's shoes.

When I went downstairs, I avoided the rocking-chair, tied up my bundle, counted out the money, laid it on the table, and then turning round said, deliberately and harshly: "There is your money; don't buy whisky with it, Mrs. Bossert."

Crying had a little sobered her. She looked up, still with less light in her face than in an intelligent dog's, but with some dim self-consciousness. It was as

a face that had appeared behind deforming bubbles of water. She half lifted her hand, let it fall, and stammered, "No, I won't, I won't. It don't do nobody no good."

The senseless desire to preach seized hold of me. "Mrs. Bossert," I cried out, "aren't you ashamed of yourself? A woman like you, who went through so much, and so long, and so bravely! And now, when you could get along all right, to act like this !"

The soggy mouth dropped open, the glazy eyes stared at me, fixedly and foolishly, then shifted to the portrait on the wall; and with a mawkish simper, as of some old drab playing sixteen, she slobbered out, nodding to the portrait: "All—for the love—o' him."

It was so utterly ludicrous that I laughed. Then a cold rage took me: "Look here," I said (and again I heard my own voice, grim and quiet, cutting the air like a whip), "if you believe, as I have heard you say, that your husband can look down on you from anywhere, remember you couldn't do a thing to hurt him worse than you're doing now. 'Love' indeed!"

The lash went home. The stricken figure huddled closer; the voice came out like a dumb thing's moan; "Oh—I'm all alone."

Then suddenly I understood. I had taken it for mockery, and profanation, that leering look at the shadow on the wall, that driveling stammer, "All—for the love—o' him." And it had been a solemn thing! No lover's word spoken in the morning of youth with the untried day before it, under the seductive witchery of answering breath and kisses, rushing blood and throbbing bodies; but the word of a woman bent with service, seamed with labor, haggard with watching; the word of a woman who, at the washtub, had kept her sufferer by the work of her hands, and watched him between the snatches of her sleep. The immemorial passion of a common heart, that is not much, that had not much, and has lost all. Years were in it. For years she had had her burden to carry; and she had carried it to the edge of the grave. There it had fallen from her, and her arms were empty. Nothing to do any more. Alone.

She sat up suddenly with a momentary flare of light in her face.—"As long as I had him," she said, "I could do. I thought I'd be glad when he was gone, a many and many a time. But I'd rather he was up there yet. . . . I did everything. I didn't put him away mean. There was a hundred and twenty-five dollars insurance. I spent it all on him. He was covered with flowers."

The flare died down, and she fell together like a collapsing bag. I saw the gray vacancy moving inward toward the last spark of intelligence in her eyes, as an ashing coal whitens inward toward the last dull red point of fire. Then this heap of rags shuddered with an inhuman whine, "A-l-o-n-e."

In the crowding shadows I felt the desolation pressing me like a vise. Behind that sunken heap in the chair gathered a midnight specter; for a moment I caught a flash from its royal, malignant eyes, the Monarch of human ruins, the murderous Bridegroom of widowed souls, King Alcohol.

"After all, as well that way as another," I muttered: and aloud (but the whip-cord had gone out of my voice), "The money is on the table."

She did not hear me; the Bridegroom "had given His Beloved Sleep."

I went out softly into the wild rain, and overhead, among the lashing arms of the leafless trees, and around the alley pocket, the wind was whining:

"A-l-o-n-e."

To Strive and Fail

There was a lonely wind crying around the house, and wailing away through the twilight, like a child that has been refused and gone off crying. Every now and then the trees shivered with it, and dropped a few leaves that splashed against the windows like big, soft tears, and then fell down on the dark, dying grass, and lay there till the next wind rose and whirled them away. Rain was gathering. Close by the gray patch of light within the room a white face bent over a small table, and dust-dim fingers swept across the strings of a zither. The low, pathetic opening chords of Albert's "Herbst-Klage" wailed for a moment like the wind; then a false note sounded, and the player threw her arms across the table and rested her face upon them. What was the use? She knew how it ought to be, but she could never do it,—never make the strings strike true to the song that was sounding within, sounding as the wind and the rain and the falling leaves sounded it, as long ago the wizard Albert had heard and conjured it out of the sound-sea, before the little black notes that carried the message over the world were written. The weary brain wandered away over the mystery of the notes, and she whispered dully, "A sign to the eye, and a sound to the ear—and that is his gift to the world—his will—and he is dead, dead, dead;—he was so great, and they are so silly, those little black foolish dots—and yet they are there—and by them his soul sings—"

The numb pain at her heart forced some sharp tears from the closed eyes. She bent and unbent her fingers hopelessly, two or three times, and then let them lie out flat and still. It was not their fault, not the fingers' fault; they could learn to do it, if they only had the chance; but they could never, never have the chance. They must always do something else, always a hundred other things first, always save and spare and patch and contrive; there was never time to do the thing she longed for most. Only the odd moments, the unexpected freedoms, the stolen half-hours, in which to live one's highest dream, only the castaway time for one's soul! And every year the fleeting glory waned, wavered, sunk away more and more sorrowfully into the gray, soundless shadows of an unlived life. Once she had heard it so clearly,—long ago, on the far-off sun-spaced, wind-singing fields of home,—the wild sweet choruses, the songs no man had ever sung. Still she heard them sometimes in the twilight, in the night, when she sat

alone and work was over; high and thin and fading, only sound-ghosts, but still with the incomparable glory of a first revelation, a song no one else has ever heard, a marvel to be seized and bodied; only,—they faded away into the nodding sleep that would conquer, and in the light and rush of day were mournfully silent. And she never captured them, never would; life was half over now.

With the thought she started up, struck the chords again, a world of plaint throbbing through the strings; surely the wizard himself would have been satisfied. But ah, once more the fatal uncertainty of the fingers. . . . She bit the left hand savagely, then touched it, softly and remorsefully, with the other, murmuring: "Poor fingers! Not your fault." At last she rose and stood at the window, looking out into the night, and thinking of the ruined gift, the noblest gift, that had been hers and would die dumb; thinking of the messages that had come to her up out of the silent dark and sunk back into it, unsounded; of the voices she would have given to the messages of the masters, and never would give now; and with a bitter compression of the lips she said: "Well, I was born to strive and fail."

And suddenly a rush of feeling swept her own life out of sight, and away out in the deepening night she saw the face of an old, sharp-chinned, white-haired, dead man; he had been her father once, strong and young, with chestnut hair and gleaming eyes, and with his own dream of what he had to do in life. Perhaps he, too, had heard sounds singing in the air, a new message waiting for deliverance. It was all over now; he had grown old and thin-faced and white, and had never done anything in the world; at least nothing for himself, his very own; he had sewn clothes,—thousands, millions of stitches in his work-weary life—no doubt there were still in existence scraps and fragments of his work,—in some old ragbag perhaps—beautiful, fine stitches, into which the keen eyesight and the deft hand had passed, still showing the artist-craftsman. But that was not his work; that was the service society had asked of him and he had rendered; himself, his own soul, that wherein he was different from other men, the unbought thing that the soul does for its own outpouring,—that was nowhere. And over there, among the low mounds of the soldiers' graves, his bed was made, and he was lying in it, straight and still, with the rain crying softly above him. He had been so full of the lust of life, so alert, so active! and nothing of it all!—"Poor father, you failed too," she muttered softly.

And then behind the wraith of the dead man there rose an older picture, a face she had never seen, dead fifty years before; but it shone through the other face, and outshone it, luminous with great suffering, much overcoming, and complete and final failure. It was the face of a woman not yet middle-aged, smitten with death, with the horror of utter strangeness in the dying eyes; the face of a woman lost in a strange city of a strange land, and with her little crying, helpless children about her, facing the inexorable agony there on the pavement, where she was sinking down, and only foreign words falling in the dying ears!—She, too, had striven; how she had striven! Against the abyss of

poverty there in the old world; against the load laid on her by Nature, Law, Society, the triune God of Terror; against the inertia of another will. She had bought coppers with blood, and spared and saved and endured and waited; she had bent the gods to her will; she had sent her husband to America, the land of freedom and promise; she had followed him at last, over the great blue bitter water with its lapping mouths that had devoured one of her little ones upon the way; she had been driven like a cow in the shambles at the landing stage; she had been robbed of all but her ticket, and with her little children had hungered for three days on the overland journey; she had lived it through, and set foot in the promised land; but somehow the waiting face was not there, had missed her or she, him,—and lost and alone with Death and the starving babes, she sank at the foot of the soldiers' monument, and the black mist came down on the courageous eyes, and the light was flickering out forever. With a bitter cry the living figure in the room stretched its hands toward the vision in the night. There was nothing there, she knew it; nothing in the heavens above nor the earth beneath to hear the cry,—not so much as a crumbling bone any more,—but she called brokenly, "Oh, why must she die so, with nothing, nothing, not one little reward after all that struggle? To fall on the pavement and die in the hospital at last!"

And shuddering, with covered eyes and heavy breath, she added wearily, "No wonder that I fail; I come of those who failed; my father, his mother,—and before her?"

Behind the fading picture, stretched dim, long shadows of silent generations, with rounded shoulders and bent backs and sullen, conquered faces. And they had all, most likely, dreamed of some wonderful thing they had to do in the world, and all had died and left it undone. And their work had been washed away, as if writ in water, and no one knew their dreams. And of the fruit of their toil other men had eaten, for that was the will of the triune god; but of themselves was left no trace, no sound, no word, in the world's glory; no carving upon stone, no indomitable ghost shining from a written sign, no song singing out of black foolish spots on paper,—nothing. They were as though they had not been. And as they all had died, she too would die, slave of the triple Terror, sacrificing the highest to the meanest, that somewhere in some lighted ball-room or gas-bright theater, some piece of vacant flesh might wear one more jewel in her painted hair.

"My soul," she said bitterly, "my soul for their diamonds!" It was time to sleep, for to-morrow—WORK.

The Sorrows of the Body

I have never wanted anything more than the wild creatures have,—a broad waft of clean air, a day to lie on the grass at times, with nothing to do but slip the blades through my fingers, and look as long as I pleased at the whole blue arch, and the screens of green and white between; leave for a month to float and float along the salt crests and among the foam, or roll with my naked skin over a clean long stretch of sunshiny sand; food that I liked, straight from the cool ground, and time to taste its sweetness, and time to rest after tasting; sleep when it came, and stillness, that the sleep might leave me when it would, not sooner—Air, room, light rest, nakedness when I would not be clothed, and when I would be clothed, garments that did not fetter; freedom to touch my mother earth, to be with her in storm and shine, as the wild things are,—this is what I wanted,—this, and free contact with my fellows;—not to love, and lie and be ashamed, but to love and say I love, and be glad of it; to feel the currents of ten thousand years of passion flooding me, body to body, as the wild things meet. I have asked no more.

But I have not received. Over me there sits that pitiless tyrant, the Soul; and I am nothing. It has driven me to the city, where the air is fever and fire, and said, "Breathe this;—I would learn; I cannot learn in the empty fields; temples are here,—stay." And when my poor, stifled lungs have panted till it seemed my chest must burst, the Soul has said, "I will allow you, then, an hour or two; we will ride, and I will take my book and read meanwhile."

And when my eyes have cried out with tears of pain for the brief vision of freedom drifting by, only for leave to look at the great green and blue an hour, after the long, dull-red horror of walls, the Soul has said, "I cannot waste the time altogether; I must know! Read." And when my ears have plead for the singing of the crickets and the music of the night, the Soul has answered, "No: gongs and whistles and shrieks are unpleasant if you listen; but school yourself to hearken to the spiritual voice, and it will not matter."

When I have beat against my narrow confines of brick and mortar, brick and mortar, the Soul has said, "Miserable slave! Why are you not as I, who in one moment fly to the utterest universe? It matters not where you are, I am free."

When I would have slept, so that the lids fell heavily and I could not lift them, the Soul has struck me with a lash, crying, "Awake! Drink some stimulant for those shrinking nerves of yours! There is no time to sleep till the work is done." And the cursed poison worked upon me, till its will was done.

When I would have dallied over my food, the Soul has ordered, "Hurry, hurry! Do I have time to waste on this disgusting scene? Fill yourself and be gone!"

When I have envied the very dog, rubbing its bare back along the ground in the sunlight, the Soul has exclaimed, "Would you degrade me so far as to put yourself on a level with beasts?" And my bands were drawn tighter.

When I have looked upon my kind, and longed to embrace them, hungered wildly for the press of arms and lips, the Soul has commanded sternly, "Cease, vile creature of fleshly lusts! Eternal reproach! Will you forever shame me with your beastliness?"

And I have always yielded: mute, joyless, fettered, I have trod the world of the Soul's choosing, and served and been unrewarded. Now I am broken before my time; bloodless, sleepless, breathless,—half-blind, racked at every joint, trembling with every leaf. "Perhaps I have been too hard," said the Soul; "you shall have a rest." The boon has come too late. The roses are beneath my feet now, but the perfume does not reach me; the willows trail across my cheek and the great arch is overhead, but my eyes are too weary to lift to it; the wind is upon my face, but I cannot bare my throat to its caress; vaguely I hear the singing of the Night through the long watches when sleep does not come, but the answering vibration thrills no more. Hands touch mine—I longed for them so once—but I am as a corpse. I remember that I wanted all these things, but now the power to want is crushed from me, and only the memory of my denial throbs on, with its never-dying pain. And still I think, if I were left alone long enough—but already I hear the Tyrant up there plotting to slay me.—"Yes," it keeps saying, "it is about time! I will not be chained to a rotting carcass. If my days are to pass in perpetual idleness I may as well be annihilated. I will make the wretch do me one more service.—You have clamored to be naked in the water. Go now, and lie in it forever."

Yes: that is what it is saying, and I—the sea stretches down there——

The Triumph of Youth

The afternoon blazed and glittered along the motionless tree-tops and down into the yellow dust of the road. Under the shadows of the trees, among the powdered grass and bushes, sat a woman and a man. The man was young and handsome in a way, with a lean eager face and burning eyes, a forehead in the old poetic mould crowned by loose dark waves of hair; his chin was long, his lips parted devouringly and his glances seemed to eat his companion's face. It was not a pretty face, not even ordinarily good looking,—sallow, not young, only youngish; but there was a peculiar mobility about it, that made one notice it. She waved her hand slowly from East to West, indicating the horizon, and said dreamingly: "How wide it is, how far it is! One can get one's breath. In the city I always feel that the walls are

squeezing my chest." After a little silence she asked without looking at him: "What are you thinking of, Bernard?"

"You," he murmured.

She glanced at him under her lids musingly, stretched out her hand and touched his eyelids with her finger-tips, and turned aside with a curious fleeting smile. He caught at her hand, but failing to touch it as she drew it away, bit his lip and forcedly looked off at the sky and the landscape: "Yes," he said in a strained voice, "it is beautiful, after the city. I wish we could stay in it."

The woman sighed: "That's what I have been wishing for the last fifteen years."

He bent towards her eagerly: "Do you think—" he stopped and stammered, "You know we have been planning, a few of us, to club together and get a little farm somewhere near—would you—do you think—would you be one of us?"

She laughed, a little low, sad laugh: "I wouldn't be any good, you know. I couldn't do the work that ought to be done. I would come fast enough and I would try. But I'm a little too old, Bernard. The rest are young enough to make mistakes and live to make them good; but when I would have my lesson learned, my strength would be gone. It's half gone now."

"No, it isn't," burst out the youth. "You're worth half a dozen of those young ones. Old, old—one would think you were seventy. And you're not old; you will never be old,"

She looked up where a crow was wheeling in the air. "If," she said slowly, following its motions with her eyes, "you once plant your feet on my face, and you will, you impish bird—my Bernard will sing a different song."

"No, Bernard won't," retorted the youth. "Bernard knows his own mind, even if he is 'only a boy.' I don't love you for your face, you—"

She interrupted him with a shrug and a bitter sneer. "Evidently! Who would?"

A look of mingled pain and annoyance overspread his features. "How you twist my words. You are beautiful to me; and you know what I meant."

"Well," she said, throwing herself backward against a tree-trunk and stretching out her feet on the grass, ripples of amusement wavering through the cloudy expression, "tell me what do you love in me." He was silent, biting his lower lip. "I'll tell you then," she said. "It's my energy, the life in me. That is youth, and my youth has overlived its time. I've had a long lease, but it's going to expire soon. So long as you don't see it, so long as my life seems fuller than yours—well—; but when the failure of life becomes visible, while your own is still in its growth, you will turn away. When my feet won't spring any more, yours will still be dancing. And you will want dancing feet with you."

"I will not," he answered shortly. "I've seen plenty of other women; I saw all the crowd coming up this morning and there wasn't a woman there to compare with you. I don't say I'll never love others, but now I don't; if I see another woman like you—But I never could love one of those young girls."

"Sh—sh," she said glancing down the road where a whirl of dust was making towards them, in the center of which moved a band of bright young figures, "there they come now. Don't they look beautiful?" There were four young girls in front, their faces radiant with sun and air, and daisy wreaths in their gleaming hair; they had their arms around each other's waists and sang as they walked, with neither more accord nor discord than the birds about them. The voices were delicious in their youth and joy; one heard that they were singing not to produce a musical effect, but from the mere wish to sing. Behind them came a troop of young fellows, coats off, heads bare, racing all over the roadside, jostling each other and purposely provoking scrambles. The tallest one had a nimbus of bright curls crowning a glowing face, dimpled and sparkling as a child's. The girls glanced shyly at him under their lashes as he danced about now in front and now behind them, occasionally tossing them a flower, but mostly hustling his comrades about. Behind these came older people with three or four very little children riding on their backs.

As the group came abreast of our couple they stopped to exchange a few words, then went on. When they had passed out of hearing the woman sat with a sphinx-like stare in her eyes, looking steadily at the spot where the bright head had nodded to her as it passed.

"Like a wildflower on a stalk," she murmured softly, narrowing her eyes as if to fix the vision, "like a tall tiger-lily."

Her companion's face darkened perceptibly. "What do you mean? What do you see?" he asked.

"The vision of Youth and Beauty," she answered in the tone of a sleep-walker, "and the glory and triumph of it,—the immortality of it—its splendid indifference to its ruined temples, and all its humble worshipers. Do you know," turning suddenly to him with a sharp change in face and voice, "what I would be wicked enough to do, if I could?"

He smiled tolerantly: "You, wicked? Dear one, you couldn't be wicked."

"Oh, but I could! If there were any way to fix Davy's head forever, just as he passed us now,—forever, so that all the world might keep it and see it for all time, I would cut it off with this hand! Yes, I would." Her eyes glittered mercilessly.

He shook his head smiling: "You wouldn't kill a bug, let alone Davy."

"I tell you I would. Do you remember when Nathaniel died? I felt bad enough, but do you know the week before when he was so very sick, I went out one day to a beautiful glen we used to visit together. They had been improving it! they had improved it so much that the water is all dying out of the creek; the little boats that used to float like pond lilies lie all helpless in the mud, and hardly a ribbon of water goes over the fall, and the old giant trees are withering. Oh, it hurt me so to think the glory of a thousand years was vanishing before my eyes and I couldn't hold it. And suddenly the question came into my head: 'If you had the power would you save Nathaniel's life or bring back the water to the

glen?' And I didn't hesitate a minute. I said, 'Let Nathaniel die and all my best loved ones and I myself, but bring back the glory of the glen!"

"When I think," she went on turning away and becoming dreamy again, "of all the beauty that is gone that I can never see, that is lost forever—the beauty that had to alter and die,—it stifles me with the pain of it. Why must it all die?"

He looked at her wonderingly. "It seems to me," he said slowly, "that beauty worship is almost a disease with you. I wouldn't like to care so much for mere outsides."

"We never long for the thing we are rich in," she answered in a dry, changed voice. Nevertheless his face lighted, it was pleasant to be rich in the thing she worshiped. He had gradually drawn near her feet and now suddenly bent forward and kissed them passionately. "Don't," she cried sharply, "it's too much like self-abasement And besides—"

His face was white and quivering, his voice choked. "Well—what besides—"

"The time will come when you will wish you had reserved that kiss for some other foot. Some one to whom it will all be new, who will shudder with the joy of it, who will meet you half way, who will believe all that you say, and say like things in fullness of heart. And I perhaps will see you, and know that in your heart you are sorry you gave something to me that you would have ungiven if you could."

He buried his face in his hands. "You do not love me at all," he said. "You do not believe me."

A curious softness came into the answer: "Oh, yes, dear, I believe you. Years ago I believed myself when I said the same sort of thing. But I told you I am getting old. I can not unmake what the years have made, nor bring back what they have stolen. I love you for your face", the words had a sting in them, "and for your soul too. And I am glad to be loved by you. But, do you know what I am thinking?"

He did not answer.

"I am thinking that as I sit here, beloved by you and others who are young and beautiful—it is no lie—in a—well, in a triumph I have not sought, but which I am human enough to be glad of, envied no doubt by those young girls,—I am thinking how the remorseless feet of Youth will tramp on me soon, and carry you away. And"—very slowly—"in my day of pain, you will not be near, nor the others. I shall be alone; age and pain are unlovely."

"You won't let me come near you," he said wildly. "I would do anything for you. I always want to do things for you to spare you, and you never let me. When you are in pain you will push me away."

A fairly exultant glitter flashed in her face. "Yes," she said, "I know my secret. That is how I have stayed young so long. See," she said, stretching out her arms, "other women at my age are past the love of men. Their affections have gone to children. And I have broken the law of nature and prolonged the love of youth because—I have been strong and stood alone. But there is an end.

Things change, seasons change, you, I, all change; what's the use of saying 'Never—forever, forever—never,' like the old clock on the stairs? It's a big lie."

"I won't talk any more," he said, "but when the time comes you will see."

She nodded: "Yes, I will see."

"Do you think all people alike?"

"As like as ants. People are vessels which life fills and breaks, as it does trees and bees and other sorts of vessels. They play when they are little, and then they love and then they have children and then they die. Ants do the same."

"To be sure. But I don't deceive myself as to the scope of it."

The crowd were returning now, and by tacit consent they arose and joined the group. Down the road they jumped a fence into a field and had to cross a little stream. "Where is our bridge?" called the boys. "We made a bridge. Some one has stolen our bridge."

"Oh, come on," cried Davy, "let's jump it." Three ran and sprang; they landed laughing and taunting the rest. Bernard sought out his beloved. "Shall I help you over?" he asked.

"No," she said shortly, "help the girls," and brushing past him she jumped, falling a little short and muddying a foot, but scrambling up unaided. The rest debated seeking an advantageous point. At last they found a big stone in the middle, and pulling off his shoes, Bernard waded in the creek, helping the girls across. The smallest one, large-eyed and timid, clung to his arm and let him almost carry her over.

"He does it real natural," observed Davy, who was whisking about in the daisy field like some flashing butterfly.

They gathered daisies and laughed and sang and chattered till the sun went low. Then they gathered under a big tree and spread their lunch on the ground. And after they had eaten, the conversation lay between the sallow-faced woman and one of the older men, a clever conversation filled with quaint observations and curious sidelights. The boys sat all about the woman questioning her eagerly, but behind in the shadow of the drooping branches sat the girls, silent, unobtrusive, holding each other's hands. Now and then the talker cast a furtive glance from Bernard's rather withdrawn face to the faces in the shadow, and the enigmatic smile hovered and flitted over her lips.

* * *

Three years later on the anniversary of that summer day the woman sat at an upstairs window in the house on the little farm that was a reality now, the little cooperative farm where ten free men and women labored and loved. She had come with the others and done her best, but the cost of it, hard labor and merciless pain, was stamped on the face that looked from the window. She was watching Bernard's figure as it came swinging through the orchard. Presently he came in and up the stairs. His feet went past her door, then turned back

irresolutely, and a low knock followed. Her eyebrows bent together almost sternly as she answered, "Come in."

He entered with a smile: "Can I do anything for you this morning?"

"No," she said quietly, "you know I like my own cranky ways. I—I'd rather do things myself." He nodded: "I know. I always get the same answer. Shall you go to the picnic? You surely will keep our foundation-day picnic?"

"Perhaps—later. And perhaps not." There was a curious tone of repression in the words.

"Well," he answered good-naturedly, "if you won't let me do anything for you, I'll have to find some one who will. Is Bella ready to go?"

"This half hour. Bella. Here is Bernard." And Bella came in. Bella, the timid girl with the brilliant complexion and gazelle soft eyes, Bella radiant in her youth and feminine daintiness, more lovely than she had been three years before.

She gave Bernard a lunch basket to carry and a shawl and a workbag and a sun umbrella, and when they went out she clung to his arm besides. She stopped near one of their own rose bushes and told him to choose a bud for her, and she put it coquettishly in her dark hair. The woman watched them till they disappeared down the lane; he had never once looked back. Then her mouth settled in a quiet sneer and she murmured: "How long is 'forever'? Three years." After a while she rose and crossed to an old mirror that hung on the opposite wall. Staring at the reflection it gave back, she whispered drearily: "You are ugly, you are eaten with pain! Do you still expect the due of youth and beauty? Did you not know it all long ago?" Then something flashed in the image, something as if the features had caught fire and burned. "I will not," she said hoarsely, her fingers clenching. "I will not surrender. Was it he I loved? It was his youth, his beauty, his life. And younger youth shall love me still, stronger life. I will not, I will not die alive." She turned away and ran down into the yard and out into the fields. She would not go on the common highway where all went, she would find a hard way through woods and over hills, and she would come there before them and sit and wait for them where the ways met. Bareheaded, ill-dressed and careless she ran along, finding a fierce pleasure in trampling and breaking the brush that impeded her. There was the road at last, and right ahead of her an old, old man hobbling along with bent back and eyes upon the ground. Just before him was a bad hole in the road; he stopped, irresolute, and looked around like a crippled insect stretching its antennae to find a way for its mangled feet. She called cheerily, "Let me help you." He looked up with dim blue eyes helplessly seeking. She led him slowly around the dangerous place, and then they sat down together on the little covered wooden bridge beyond.

"Ah!" murmured the old man, shaking his head, "it is good to be young." And there was the ghost of admiration in his watery eyes, as he looked at her tall straight figure.

"Yes," she answered sadly, looking away down the road where she saw Bella's white dress fluttering, "it is good to be young."

The lovers passed without noticing them, absorbed in each other. Presently the old man hobbled away. "It will come to that too," she muttered looking after him. "The husks of life!"

The Old Shoemaker

He had lived a long time there, in the house at the end of the alley, and no one had ever known that he was a great man. He was lean and palsied, and had a crooked back; his beard was grey and ragged, and his eyebrows came too far forward; there were seams and flaps in the empty, yellow old skin, and he gasped horribly when he breathed, taking hold of the lintel of the door to steady himself when he stepped out on the broken bricks of the alley. He lived with a frightful old woman who scrubbed the floors of the rag-shop, and drank beer, and growled at the children who poked fun at her. He had lived with her eighteen years, she said, stroking the furry little kitten that curled up in her neck as if she had been beautiful.

Eighteen years they had been drinking and quarreling together—and suffering. She had seen the flesh sucking away from the bones, and the skin falling in upon them, and the long, lean fingers growing more lean and trembling, as they crooked round his shoemaking tools.

It was very strange she had not grown thin; the beer had bloated her, and rolls of weak, shaking flesh lapped over the ridges of her uncouth figure. Her pale, lack-lustre blue eyes wandered aimlessly about as she talked: No—he had never told her, not even in their quarrels, not even when they were drunken together, of the great Visitor who had come up the little alley, yesterday, walking so stately over the sun-beaten bricks, taking no note of the others, and coming in at the door without asking. She had not expected such an one; how could she? But the Old Shoemaker had shown no surprise at the Mighty One. He smiled and set down the teacup he was holding, and entered into communion with the Stranger. He noticed no others, but continued to smile; and the infinite dignity of the Unknown fell upon him, and covered the wasted old limbs and the hard, wizened face, so that all we who entered, bowed, and went out, and did not speak.

But we understood, for the Mighty One gave understanding without words. We had been in the presence of Freedom! We had stood at the foot of Tabor, and seen this worn, old, world-soiled soul lose all its dross and commonplace, and pass upward smiling, to the Transfiguration. In the hands of the Mighty One the crust had crumbled, and dropped away in impalpable powder. Souls should be mixed of it no more. Only that which passed upward, the fine white playing

flame, the heart of the long, life-long watches of patience, should rekindle there in the perennial ascension of the great Soul of Man.

Where the White Rose Died

It was late at night, a raw, rough-shouldering night, that shoved men in corners as having no business in the street, and the few people in the northbound car drew themselves into themselves, radiating hedgehog quills of feeling at their neighbors. Presently there came in a curious figure, clothed in the drapery of its country's honor, the blue flannel flapping very much about its legs. I looked at its feet first, because they were so very small and girlish, and because the owner of them adjusted the flapping pants with the coquetry of a maiden switching her skirts. Then I glanced at the hands: they also were small and womanish, and constantly in motion. At last, the face, expecting a fresh young boy's, not long away from some country village. It was the sunk, seamed face of a man of forty-five, seared, and with iron-gray eyebrows, but lit by twinkling young eyes, that gleamed at everything good-humoredly. The sailor's pancake with its official lettering was pushed rakishly down and forward, and looking at hat and wearer, one instinctively turned milliner and decorated the "shape" with aigrette and bows,—they would nod so accordant with the flirting head. Presently the restless hands went up and gave the hat another tilt, went down and straightened the "divided skirt," folded themselves an instant while the little feet began tattooing the car floor, and the scintillant eyes looked general invitation all round the car. No perceptible shrinkage of quills, however, so the eyes wandered over to their image in the plate glass, and directly the hat got another coquettish dip, and the skirts another flirt and settle.

The conductor came in: some one to talk to at last! "Will you let me off at Ninth and Race?"

The dim chill of a smile shivered over the other faces in the car. Ninth and Race! Who ever heard a defender of his country's glory ask a conductor on a street car in Philadelphia for any other point than Ninth and Race!

The conductor nodded appreciatively. "Just come to the city, I suppose," he said interlocutively.

The sailor plucked off his hat, exhibiting his label with child-like vanity: "S. S. Alabama. Here for three days just. Been over in New York."

"Like it?" remarked the conductor, prolonging his stay inside the car.

The hat went on again, proudly. "Sixteen years in the service. Yes, sir. Sixteen years. The service is all right. The service is good enough for me. Live there. Expect to die there. Sixteen years. You won't forget to let me off at Ninth and Race."

"No. Going to see Chinatown?"

"Sure. Chinatown's all right. Seen it in Hong Kong. Want to see it in Philadelphia."

O cradle of my country's freedom! These are your defenders,—these to whom your chief delight is your stews and your brothels, your fantans and your opium dens, your sinks of filth and your cesspools of slime! Let them only be as they were "at Hong Kong"—or worse—and "the service" asks no more. He will live in it and die in it, and it's good enough for him. Oh, not your old-time patriotic legends, nor the halls of the great Rebel Birth, nor the solemn, silent Bell that once proclaimed liberty throughout the land, nor the piteous relics of your dead wise men, nor any dream of your bright, pure young days when yet you were "a fair greene country towne," swims up in the vision of "the service" when he sets his foot within your borders, filling him with devotion to Our Lady Liberty, and drawing him to New World pilgrim shrines. Not these, oh no, not these. But your leper spot, your Old World plague- house, your breeding-ground of pest-begotten human vermin! So there is Chinatown, and electric glare enough upon it, and rat-holes enough within it, "the service" is good enough for him,—he will shoot to order in your defense till he dies!

Rat-tat-tat went the little feet upon the floor, and the pancake got another rakish pull. Presently the active figure squared sharply about and faced the door. The car had stopped, and a drunken man was staggering in. The sailor caught him good-humoredly in his arms, swung him about, and seated him beside himself with a comforting "Now you're all right, sir; sit right here, my friend."

The drunkard had a sodden, stupid face and bleary eyes from which the alcohol was oozing. In his shaking hand he held a bunch of delicate half-opened roses, hothouse roses, cream and pink; the odor of them drifted faintly through the car like a whiff of summer. Something like a sigh of relaxation exhaled from the hedgehogs, and a dozen commiserating eyes were fastened on the ill-fated flowers,—so fragile, so sweet, so inoffensive, so wantonly sacrificed. The hot, unsteady, clutching hand had already burned the stems, and the pale, helpless faces of the roses drooped heavily.

The drunkard, full of beery effervescence, cast a bubbling look over the car, and spying a young lady opposite, suddenly stood up and offered the bouquet to her. She stared resolutely through him, seeing and hearing nothing, not even the piteous child-blossoms, with their pleading, downbent heads, and with a confused muttering of "No offense, no offense, you know," the man sank back again. As he did so the uncertain fingers released one stem, and a cream-white bloom went fluttering down, like a butterfly with broken wings. There it lay, jolting back and forth on the dirty floor, and no one dared to pick it up.

Presently the drunkard sopped over comfortably on the sailor's shoulder, who, with a generally directed wink of bonhomie, settled him easily, bestowing a sympathetic pat upon the bloated cheek. The conductor disturbed the situation by asking for his fare. The drunkard stupidly rubbed his eyes and offered his

flowers in place of the nickel. Again they were refused; and after a fluctuant search in his pockets between intervals of nodding, the dirty, over-fingered bit of metal was produced, accepted—and still the dying blossoms shivered in the torturer's hands.

He was drowsing off again, when, by some sudden turn of the obstructed machinery in his skull, his lids opened and he struggled up; the image of myself must have swum suddenly across the momentarily acting eye-nerve, and with gurgling deference, at the immanent risk of losing his equilibrium once more, he proffered the bouquet to me, grabbing the heads and presenting them stem-end towards. A smothered snuffle went round the car.

I wanted them, Oh, how I wanted them! My heart beat suffocatingly with the sense of baffled pity and rage and cowardice. Who was he, that drunken sot, with his smirching, wabbling hand, that I should fear to take the roses from him? Why must I grind my teeth and sit there helpless, while those beautiful things were crushed and blasted and torn in living fragments? I could take them home, I could give them drink, they would lift up their heads, they would open wide, for days they would make the room sweet, and the pale, soft glory of their inimitable petals would shine like a luminous promise across the winter. Nobody wanted them, nobody cared; this sodden beast in the flare-up of his consciousness wished to be quit of them. Why might I not take them? Something sharp bit and burned my eyelids as I glanced at the one on the floor. The conductor had stepped on it and crushed it open; and there lay the marvelous creamy leaves, curled at their edges like kiss-seeking lips, each with its glory greater than Solomon's, all fouled and ruined in the human reek.

And I dared not save the others! Miserable coward!

I forced my hands tighter in my pockets and turned my head away towards the outside night and the backward slipping street. Between me and it, a dim reflection wavered, the image of the thing that stood there before me; and somewhere, like a far-off, dulled bell, I heard the words, "And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him." The sailor, no doubt with the kindly intention of relieving me from annoyance, and not averse to play with anything, made pretence of seizing the roses. Then the drunkard, in an abandon of generosity, began tearing off the blossoms by the heads, scrutinizing, and casting each away as unfit for the exalted service of his "friend," till the latter reaching out managed to get hold of a white one with a stem. He trimmed its sheltering green carefully, brought out a long black pin, stuck it through the stalk, and fastened the pale shining head against his dark blue blouse. All hedgehoggery smiled. We had thrust the roses through with our forbidding quills,—what matter that a barbarian nail crucified this last one? The drunkard slept again, limply holding his scattering bunch of headless stems and torn foliage. Pink and cream the petals strewed the floor. Where was the loving hand that had nursed them to bloom in this hard, unwonted weather; loved and nursed and—sold them?

"Ninth and Race," sang out the conductor. The sailor sprang up with a merry grin, bowed gaily to everyone, twinkled his fingers in the air with a blithe "Ta ta; I'm off for Chinatown," as he slid through the door, and was away in a trice, tripping down to the pestiferous sink that was awaiting him somewhere. And on his breast he wore the pallid flower that had offered its stainless beauty to me, that I had loved,—and had not loved enough to save. The rest were dead; but that one—somewhere down there in a den where even the gas-choked lights were leering like prostitutes' eyes, down there in that trough of swill and swine, that pure, still thing had yet to die.

The White Room.

It was an artist's masterpiece. He had wrought it all with his own hands, after his idea, which grew as he wrought. It was not square nor long nor round, nor any regular shape, such as we are used to thinking of rooms; it was wider here and narrower there, and had strange turns and niches and carvings and arches; and in all these there were bits of statuary, or tiny fountains, or flowers, or curious sea things gathered from many shores, shells and corals and ocean feathers, picked up years apart. The light came from above as all light should, and the dazzling beauty of the ceiling was like a broken arc from a cave's roof, so white and gleaming was it with the strange substance he had made; and the walls had all the wild fantastic tracery of the frost-forests on our winter windows, which God paints—but no man. The statues were all white, of unflawed marble; and the silken curtains looped back from the small bed were snow. The fish in the little fountains had silver scales, and in the recess where he had made an aviary were four pure-plumed birds. And all the flowers and all the curious sea things were white. The divans were of spotless velvet, and the rugs upon the glistening floor, wrought in strange patterns by his own deft fingers, were of white velvet too. There was a little case of books bound in blanch covers, and beside it a silver-stringed harp, mantled in a stainless case. There was one picture, only one. If it had been made for sale! But now it is only I to write of it, I, who saw it once after all was finished. He was an impressionist, my artist, long before the impressionists began to make noise in the world. He painted the white light of a day, as it lies on sky and water,—only a stretch of sky and water, seen of a summer afternoon, when the clouds drift like curled feathers and the boats are sleeping on Canarsie Bay. That was the last touch to the White Room, except the Easter-lilies he placed in the great vase between the tall wax tapers. He had been working fifteen years that day,—for her, the Soul of the White Room, herself the whitest thing, his pure-faced Scandinavian girl with the chiselled face that looked out

with saint's eyes from under its aureole of pale hair as if the breath of the High One had blown upon her, and no other. So she had seemed to him when he married her, and so with his steadfast love she seemed to him now. Fifteen years! And he had said no word to her in all that time of the marvel he was creating for her,—all with his own hands, which was the only true art. It had taken very long. And all that time that he had wandered and searched and wrought, for her, only for her, she had been living with that beautiful, meek, white patience of hers, in the dirty, narrow city alley, where they had *had* to live when young and poor; complaining nothing,— only now and then wishing for a little more of his presence, suggesting perhaps some little trifle, which he did not buy, partly to prove her excellence, partly because of the great thing he was making. And when he saw a darker blue of disappointment settle in her eyes would say, "My girl shall have something far better some day."

And now it was come to pass. To-morrow he would take her, when the third lily should have opened a little wider. She should see his white dream, of which she was the angel,—had been for so many years. She should understand what she had been to him, who had not wrought for the praise of men but for one woman only.

And thinking so he turned into the alley-way, lifting his eyes to the small-paned window.

There Was No Light.

Yes, she had gone. There was a letter badly spelt and written, but it told a world. She had waited, she had been patient, she had served, she had not asked much, she had been promised as we promise children stars in the morning if they sleep now. She had wanted a little, only a little, every day; nothing grand, nothing more than ordinary; a common rag-carpet would have done, a cheap frame or so for the bright prints she had saved to trim the naked walls; some other little things, no matter what now; she knew she should never get them. He had not noticed perhaps; his life had lain outside; he had seen things. But for her it had been so weary. She was going away; it was wrong, perhaps, but she should not come back.

Now the artist was a little more than an artist. He was a philosopher, too. So he did not act like a common man. He did not groan to his friends, nor take to drink, nor talk of suicide, nor grow sour to men and bitter to women. He lived on in the old place, quite the same. He played with other women's children, and sat late at the door on summer nights reading his paper by the street-light. But still he went alone to the house under the trees, by the water-side, and saw that the White Room was kept very white, long after the lilies had withered.

And the end of it all was that one night he found her in the gutter, quite drunk and dying. And he took her in his arms and rode with her to the waterside and carried her to the White Room, and laid her,

all soiled, on the white bed, and there she died. Just before, she unclosed her misty eyes and shuddered: "Ugh! The horrid fancies in the liquor. It looks all

white, white, like a Dead-house! Powdered gravestones! Ugh! If there were only a bit of blue or red."

He dug her grave with his own hands. He worked all night to line it with the gayest blooms of Life, and laid her in when the morning was streaking crimson against the azure. To-day she sleeps under violets and carnations, with no white stone at foot or head.

The Gilded Edge of Hell

Mr. Editor:–The broad roll of the Delaware flashed back a white water-glisten at the full moon. Fifteen or twenty vessels spread their white wings to the slow breeze, or sent the black vomit from their whistling throats upward to the night sky. Splash, splash! fell the water from the sides of the "John A. Warner" as she cut the flowing current, that ran like long, waving hair, away from the white line in her wake. Upon her decks two thoughtful women gazed at the dark banks, lifted their eyes to the soft sky and occasionally spoke a few words of murmured admiration. Presently, upon the right, broke a long, shining road of electric lights, white, glittering, illuminating the night.

"Gloucester, how bright it is!" remarked the elder woman.

"The gilded edge of hell," returned the other slowly, "a living hell!"

After the silence that followed she resumed in a low voice: "It is the place where the drift from human wrecks floats and gathers. Now and then the flower from a broken stem swirls in a catches, and smiles there in the light for a little while. But it crushes and drops below very soon. I have been there–you know I have a passion for moving among the sad things, the bitter things of the earth. Somebody told me that since Philadelphia had been cleared of its dives, the corruption had broken out in a fresh place, and Gloucester was the moral ulcer of the City of Brotherly Love.

"There are rows on rows of shambling buildings where all manner of coarse amusements, coarse language, coarse accents, and coarse tastes strike the sensitive being like hard blows upon his body; the atmosphere is saturated with the fumes of nicotine, and beer seems to ooze from the pores of the rotting wood. The chairs are sticky, and beery rivulets run upon all the table where unsteady hands have tilted the tumblers. Here and there the wreck of a woman, gaudy with inharmonic colors, caked with paint to hide the scars of vileness, talks with some leer-eyed wretch whose every lineament betrays the animal rampant, the intellectual atrophied.

"But sometimes you will see, as I saw, a pure beautiful face, with a brow like the Madonna's, chaste lips, a deep introspective light in a pair of lovely blue eyes, and her whole presence breathing the scorn of tolerance towards her

surroundings. What is that face doing in that hideous crowed, which shrinks away from her high look, and, turning, sneers a horrid prophecy? Look, you moralists, you would-be charitables, you expounders of "faith and works," you guides of "law and order," whose blue-coated hirelings walk about, leering, as those other wretches, at these shells of women. Look! What do you think of your works?"

"There, I am declaiming," exclaimed our narrator in a disgusted tone; "I forgot I was talking to you; I was thinking of that beautiful, scornful creature over there in that scum, with one knows not what of daily insult to bear, and there–these canting preachers, on the other side, telling how law and Gospel protect and rescue women. But that wasn't the worst. Up in one of those summer concert halls a little child, only eleven years old, with the genius of a Modjeska and the voice of an angel, was singing to that reef of wrecks, whose harsh gutterals came to one's ears like the din and clash of–can you imagine it, I wonder–the clash of the breakers tearing rock-pinioned ships in pieces! Yes, that is it. There is something in all their faces, something in all their tones that is not individual; it is the undertone of the social whirlpool in which they are engulfed, speaking in them, tearing them. Well, this little child; my friend brought her some flowers and asked her to come and talk with me.

"It was awful, the self-composure and indifference of that baby, the ease with which she told me the most transparent lies, and the contempt with which she spoke of that quiet life of home which had no charms for her because it was not exciting.

"Oh! the excitement! The bawdy costumes, the brassy instruments–I am sure their throats must have been green with verdigris–the abominable glare, the vulgar voices, the vulgar faces. Oh, the "excitement!" I couldn't bear it. I left that room that seemed to me to be full of grinning skulls just as that baby started in again with her divine voice, to sing something about a mother's love. A mother's love in such a place as that! but some mother loved and caressed every one of them I suppose. Ugh! that is that horrible brass music again. But the water softens it. I wonder if the harsh, bad notes go down with the current, and only the pure tones go far enough to reach us here? It is a pretty notion, isn't it, that there is some good even there, and the good reaches farther than the evil, in proportion! There, we are quite past them. Quite past! The bright edge of a black horror! See how white the moon shines."

* * * * * * *

Reader, *why*, do you suppose, did I write this young woman's recitative out for the Investigator? *The owner of the Gloucester dives is a Christian man*, who "renders unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and to God the things that are God's, *out of the earnings of shame and the corruption of children.*

She Died For Me.

THE Doctor was a lean dark man, with sad eyes. They looked up, wide and singularly deep, as his visitor said: "I don't understand you half-way freethinkers in the least. I am out and out. I have no patience with wishy-washiness. I just tell them straight that I haven't any use for their musty old frauds, nor their whole outfit of priests, that live by them. But you-you know religion is all superstition, yet you go on talking to those people as if you accepted their belief in God and immortality and the vicarious atonement and the whole programme!"

The voice was loud and disagreeably disputative; just such a voice as one might expect from the hard mouth above the close-shaven chin.

"Perhaps I do, in a way," answered the doctor, slowly and a little wearily.

"Perhaps you do," was the testy echo; "oh, yes, perhaps you do, in a way! That's your fine-spun agnosticism. Perhaps the moon is green cheese, too, in a way, to a set of senses that have never existed! "

The Doctor shook his head and smiled a little denying smile. Just then the door opened, and an odd red-lipped, round-eyed, fuzzy-haired· little thing looked in curiously. The Doctor held out his hand: "Come, Sonya." The queer small figure, almost grotesquely dressed, came hopping to his side, stretching up her fat little confident hands.

"Your little girl, I presume?" said the visitor, with that air of polite boredom with which your born disputant bears an interruption of his favorite pastime.

"Yes,-mine," with a loving stroke upon the fuzzy head, "only *mine*-her mother is dead:" The visitor was silent. "And that, you see," went on the Doctor, with a little catch in his voice, "is one of the reasons I believe-in a way. Sonya's mother was a very strong woman, strong every way. I was weak, not so much in my body as-"

He pressed the fuzzy head against his cheek and went on in an unnaturally dry voice: "In fact, I am so yet, too much. She was a midwife over there in Russia, and when we came here she urged me to study. We were poor, of course. It was in the days of the persecution and we had had to sacrifice everything. My Sonya was not born then, and her father was sent to Siberia. To us they gave forty-eight hours to sell all and go. So we had nothing. Only my sister had ever her courageous heart,-the heart I think of all our old forefathers in the wilderness. She always saw a Promised Land before her, always made a way through the desert to it. She kept us up; she never complained; she worked, she said, to rest-to rest from the thought of the lonely figure, or may be only a grave, there in the ice-blasts and the white desert."

The deep eyes looked far away to the eastward. There was a silence and ,a sigh, and then:

"Yes, she kept us up, and paid my way at college. I didn't wish it at first, but she would have it so, and, as I told you, she was stronger than I. And then the love of study came upon me, which is greater than all other loves; and I did not think of her part any more, the heavy, patient burden-bearing. I did not see how she grew wan and weak; and she-she never said, 'Look at me.'

"It was just a week before I graduated that I knew it first, when I came in and found her dead upon the bed. Just a week before! And she died and never knew she had not worked in vain. She would not let them send for me; she would not tell them where to find me; she said: 'Don't bother him. I shall be better.'

"It was black to me after that. I passed the examinations. I don't know how,-somehow. I fancied I had to, for her sake. Somewhere in those dark, numb days the explanation worked itself out to me, (at least, I believe it is an explanation,) that she is not dead, not really dead. I am not so weak and selfish as I was; that is because some of her strength was impressed on me. The better part of me is she; even the little knowledge I have to soften pain, surely she bought it–it is hers. I do not know whether Jesus of Galilee died for others' sins or not, but I know surely that she died for me. And I should not be able to bear it, if I could not think she still lived,-if I did not know that her great unselfish spirit was not lost, only broken through the frail ego-bubble, and mixing, not in me alone, though truly much in me, but in everyone she helped in her helpful life. And for that sake I love all determined ones, all patient, all devoted, all uncomplaining ones, whether they be what you would call enlightened or not, seeing her in them."

"Truly now," murmured the visitor, "I shouldn't."

"That is because, in spite of your freethought, you are orthodox and place reality in shadows," answered the other, looking very steadily at the falling snow and cradling Sonya's head beneath his chin.

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