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# An Old-Fashioned Romance

# AN OLD-FASHIONED ROMANCE

BY

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*"Dreaming True," "The Love Letters of a Mystic," Etc.*


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# CHAPTER I.

## EVERTON.

"Tell me, gentle traveller, thou
  Who hast wandered far and wide,
Seen the sweetest roses blow
  And the brightest rivers glide;
Say, of all thine eyes have seen,
Which the fairest land has been?"
—From the Persian.

ALGERNON EMMETT NICHOL, a little boy of twelve, drove through the first gate of the plantation known as "Everton," in Jefferson County, Mississippi. He threw a wistful glance at the sombre trees, the long drive leading up to the very high hill, upon which the dignified, white house was situated.

He shuddered a bit and said to his small servant, "I don't like it much. It's too cold. Looks like a big tomb, and the trees are so solemn. They are aweful, I think."

"Yeh, they're awful," answered the faithful little Dick. "Not a bit like de trees in Louisiany. And they ain't no

palmettos. And I'se sho they'se ghosts hidden behin' those big trees."

"There are no ghosts," said the little gentleman to his servant, "and you don't understand that I did not say the house was 'awful,' meaning 'terrible'; I said 'aweful.' There is a difference, you know."

"Yessir," said the little servant, "I knows that you sticks on an 'e' and makes an awful diffrence in a word now and then. But I on'y goes by the sound." "Does you hear the dogs, Buddie?" continued the little negro. "I don' like dogs."

"Dogs won't hurt you, if you keep quiet," said the little master. This he said in a superior and imperious tone. "And don't call me Buddie; call me Marse Nichol. I'm thirteen soon, and my guardian will not approve of your manners."

"Yessir," said the little negro. "And I'se awful scared o' yo' guardian. The name sounds awful. 'Wade Hampton Harrison'—what a awful name."

"It's a fine name," answered the young master, "and the lady, his wife, is my

cousin—Mary Nichol Harrison, from the Eastern Shore."

"Eastern Sho'e! Wha's that, Marse Nichol?"

"Oh, I don't know, but it's something to do with Maryland and must be nice."

"Yessir, I'se shuh it's nice, but jes' the same, I wish we could turn right 'round and go on back to Louisiany. I would swim the Miss'ippi to get ther'. I never seed such a long drive. Ain't we neber goin' to get to the house, Buddie—I mean Marse Alge'non?"

"Ask the driver how far it is," answered the young master. The little negro kept quiet. "I say, ask the driver how far it is."

"I'se scared, honey—Buddie—Marse Algy—you ax him."

"Oh, very well," said Algernon. "How far is it, Uncle, to the house?"

"Half a mile, sir," answered the old negro driver. "It's a strange house. It seems to get farther away as you get closer to it."

"You hear that, Buddie?" said the little negro. "It's haunted, I knowed it."

"Be quiet. You sound so ignorant. Always talking about ghosts and haunts and things."

"The master," continued the old negro driver, "takes particular pains to have this drive long and straight, and had the trees cut so as to make it very grand."

"You mean mysterious," said the young master. "It's very handsome, I think."

"Oh, yes, everything's nice here, sir. Marse Wade is terrible particular about everything."

"I knowed it," said the little valet under his breath. "I felt it, and I'se scared to death. I don't like that awful soundin' name, Wade Hampton Harrison! If he got mad——"

"Be quiet," said young Algernon, "and don't talk so much."

The old negro driver reached for his whip, and touched the horses lightly. In a minute they were going at a merry pace up the long, straight drive, drawing closer to the white house, deeply set in trees.

"I never like straight and narrow

paths. I'se heard about them all my life," said the little negro.

"Be quiet," said the young master.

"Yessir, but I wish I was back with the palmettos, the red bushes, the berries, the nice black dirt. I lobes Louisiany, but I don' like this Miss'ippi."

"You haven't been here long enough to know," answered his master.

"Yes, I has, honey—Buddie—I means Marse Algy. I didn't like it from the time we struck those blackberry bushes and dat sandy hill just dis side de Miss'ippi River." The little negro crouched down in the cushions. "Ain't you scared a little bit o' that Wade Hampton Harrison?"

"Of course not, and there he is now, standing in the door. We are almost there."

"Giddap," said the driver, and touched the horses again, as the last gate was opened and they drove proudly up to the door.

A stately figure stood in the door, then solemnly walked toward the steps

and stood again, awaiting his young guest.

The old driver hopped off the seat, opened the carriage door, and made a motion for the little negro to get out and assist his young master, but the young servant was so frightened that he crouched in the cushions and stared blankly with his mouth wide open, gazing at the figure at the head of the steps. Young Algernon looked at him reproachfully, stepped down out of the carriage, and walked up the steps to meet his guardian.

The little gentleman was dressed in black velvet, with a large white collar, upon which his dark brown curls rested lovingly.

Mr. Wade Hampton Harrison held out his hand, and said, "How do you do, sir."

"How do *you* do," answered young Algernon, quickly.

"I'm very well, thank you,"—with emphasis on the thank you. "Your Cousin Mary will be here in a moment."

Just then a very tall young woman

came forward, and without saying, "How do you do," said, "Well, little boy, you are here at last, at home, at Everton."

"Yes, Cousin Mary," answered young Algernon, holding out his hand, "It is very wonderful."

"I am glad to see you, Algernon," continued his cousin. "You must be happy here with Cousin Mary and Cousin Wade," she added tenderly.

He turned in time to catch a determined look in his guardian's eyes, who said abruptly, "Mary, have old Mandy cut off those curls at once. He is twelve years old, you know."

"They are too beautiful, Wade, to be cut,—and his mother loved them so."

At the mention of his mother, little Algernon suppressed a sob, but said briefly, "Cousin Wade is right, Cousin Mary. I am too old for curls."

"Of course," added his guardian, and turned to the little valet. "Take your master's things upstairs. Follow Ben."

Ben, black, gray and smiling, led the way up the long stairway. The little

valet followed, looking back lovingly at his young master.

"I knowed dey do somethin' cruel right away,—cuttin' off his curls, the beautifullest thing on him, too. Dat Wade Hampton Harrison, I knowed he'd do somethin' like that, and this place is haunted, too. I'se always right about feelin' things, and I'se sho be'n feelin' things today."

"Come along," said Ben. "You can't be so slow around heah, and talk so much, and be careful 'cause Marse Wade notices everything."

"I sho will be careful. I don't feel things for nuthin'. I hope he be good to Buddie. He feels awful cut up about his mother dyin' so sudden, and his father jus' a yeah ago. Buddie, he cries a lot in his sleep, but not in the daytime. I'se got to watch Buddie. That's the last thing the old missus said to me. Here, with no father, with that fierce lookin' man with de awful name to boss him 'round. I can see Miss Mary have no say with that man. Didn't I tell I'se scared to death of dat Wade Hampton Harrison!"

## CHAPTER II.

### MORNING.

"To have love is to work miracles."
—Michael Fairless.

THE next morning Ben knocked on the door lightly and said, "Marse Algy, breakfast is ready." He stuck his head in the door and found Algernon sound asleep, with a great tear on his long lashes. "Marse Algy," he said tenderly, "wake up. I called you befo'e. It's breakfast time. Marse Wade will be waitin' for you." This he said nervously.

Slowly awakening, and dashing the large tear from his lashes, Algernon jumped out of bed and said, "Thank you, I'll be there in a minute. Where is Dick?"

"Dick—Dick who?" said Ben.

"My servant," answered Algernon, with emphasis on the my.

"Oh," said Ben, "dat nigger—dat scarry, good for nuthin' nigger, he's

down in de yard sittin' on the wood pile cryin'."

"Crying—what's the matter?"

"He's cryin' 'cause your curls have gone. Said someone ought to cry. He's makin' a real funeral out of the curls. Asked Miss Mary to let him bury dem in a box under the magnolia tree, but she's keeping them locked up. Fore the Lawd, she's crying, too. Said it was awful cruel for Marse Wade to have dem cut off so sudden like."

Dressing hurriedly, the young gentleman walked proudly down the long stairs, into the hall and then into the dining room.

"Sorry to be late, Cousin Wade, but I over-slept."

"Quite all right this time," said his cousin. "You must have been tired. A long drive."

"It's very beautiful here," added young Algernon hurriedly.

"Yes," said his cousin.

Sitting at the head of the long table, Wade Hampton Harrison looked very

forbidding and severe. Algernon looked around for his cousin Mary.

"Your Cousin Mary will see you after breakfast. I wanted to see you alone, and talk about your studies. Do you know any Latin?"

"A little," answered the young man.

"Know any mathematics?"

"A little."

"Any history?"

"Oh, a lot."

"Yes," said the severe cousin, "what history?"

"All history, but especially about Napoleon Bonaparte. Do you like Napoleon too, Cousin Wade?"

"Greatest man that ever lived," answered his cousin. "The Code Napoleon. Do you know what that is, young man?"

"Oh, yes, Cousin Wade, but it's the battles I love so."

"Of course," answered the cousin. "I see that we're going to be friends."

Serving him quail, he touched a bell and said to the waitress, "Bring Master Algernon some waffles. See that they

are hot and a lot of syrup—Louisiana syrup. This young gentleman belongs to Louisiana, the Napoleon country."

"Yes, sir," said the waitress.

"Stick to your own country, my boy, to your own ideas, ideals, and do not pretend to like this hill country. Stick to the flat country. It is just as nice as this, and your father was an early settler in Louisiana; came from the Eastern Shore of Maryland, you know. Always be yourself, my boy, be natural. You can afford to be natural. The house here, the horses, the dogs, the servants, all are yours. You can have anything you like. But never tell me a lie. I make no distinction between a story and a lie. Any form of deception is immoral and ungentlemanly. I can forgive anything except a lie. My people never lie—the Wade Hampton Harrisons," he said proudly. "I am sure that yours do not either, but it is a good way to begin life with an absolute intolerance of any form of hypocrisy."

Just then the little valet stuck his head in the door to see if his young master was

all right;—just in time to hear the word "lie" and that name, which had frightened him so. He took one look, and then stepped out of the room, like a frightened animal.

After breakfast the young master followed him into the yard. "You're a coward, Dick. Why did you run? I would never run."

"Co'se, Honey, you'se white, and I'se black—dat's de diffurence. I'se come from the runnin' kind. I'se just natuly scarry. But don't you ever be scared. I'd kill anybody what hurt you. Dat's what I'se heah for."

"There is nothing to be afraid of," answered the young master. "My cousin is very kind."

"You mean fierce. He's fierce. I ain't nebber goin' to make him angry, believe me. And don't you make him angry, either. I tell you I'se jest scared o' de whole place. It's too big and sternlike. Did you ever see such a big dinin'room, and the bedrooms and de awful lookin' furniture and such trees and such a big hall? I feels my hair stand straight up

on ends when I cross that hall. I prays all the way, but I feels the ghost followin' close behin' me. I tells you, Buddie, the place is haunted. Let's run off and go back to Louisiany. Go back to the red trees and the palmetters, where a feller can hide if things get after him. An' you don't look natural with yo' curls gone. Everythin' is strange here, even you."

In an hour the horses were brought around to the front door and young Algernon rode off into the fields with his little valet following closely behind him. A negro servant carried the bird sacks, the guns and some sandwiches for the day.

"I likes deer huntin' much better, don' you, Honey? But dar ain't no deer heah. Dar ain't nuthin' I like."

"Oh, it's very pretty, I think," said the young master. "Watch your rein, or you'll go off in the briar bushes again."

"Mind yo' own rein, Buddie, or you'll fall off that big horse. You ain't used to ridin' big horses."

"Be quiet, and don't tell everything you know. It's stupid."

"Yes, Buddie, but suppose you faint like you did back in Louisiany."

"Oh, I'm all right," said young Algernon.

There was a soft south breeze, a burst of color—red gold and brown of every description. They rode on into the fields. They passed under a large walnut tree. A nut fell directly upon the little negro's head.

"My Gawd," he said under his breath, "What am dat, Buddie?"

"Oh, it's only a nut. Be quiet. We'll soon be ready to fire. Tomorrow we're going fox hunting, you know."

. . . . . .

All that day they rode through the fields, returning in the dusk with quail, most of which the negro servant had shot.

. . . . . .

In a short while dinner was announced. A long table was covered with flowers, Venetian glass and Sheffield silver and tall candelabra. It stood in the center of the room, while the several side-boards, as they were called in those days, were heaped with every imaginable flower,

fresh from the hot-house. The large decanters sparkled with wines and Kentucky whiskey. A servant continuously prepared mint juleps, which were served to each gentleman, while the ladies were given a small glass of sherry, with a rose leaf in the glass. These were the cocktails of the old-fashioned days.

The meats were not served, as in these days, but brought on the table and placed in front of the host, while he carved skilfully, and at the same time indulged in repartee.

The dinner was more of a banquet—a feast—than anything else, and the stories that were told at the table were of unique value.

Young Algernon was again late in getting to the dining room. He slipped off his riding habit and put on his black velvet suit again. He walked down the long stairway to the hall, which led to the dining room. He walked in and asked to be excused, not knowing whether he was to sit at the large table or not. One of the gentlemen at the table turned and looked at him, saying to his

host, "Is this the little gentleman from Louisiana?"

"Yes," said the host.

Calling Algernon to his side, he said "This is Mr. Green—Mr. Payne Green." Mr. Green held out his hand and said "I knew your Mother. She was very beautiful. I visited in her home and she came from my beautiful country, the Eastern Shore of Maryland."

"Yes," said the little man, and turned his head suddenly so that his new friend would not see the tears which quickly rushed into his eyes at the mention of his mother.

"Cousin Wade," he continued, "am I to sit at the big table with you, or shall I wait?"

"Of course," he said, "you are much too grown up and gallant to dine with the children."

"Nice boy, is he not?" continued the cousin, looking at Mr. Green.

"He is splendid," said Mr. Green, taking him in at a glance.

"Your eyes," he said to Algernon, "your hazel eyes bring back memories,

my boy. You must tell me all about Louisiana, the deer, the camp hunts. I am sure that we are going to be friends."

"Thank you very much," said Algernon.

. . . . . .

A year of hunting, of life in the country, passed swiftly away, and young Algernon was sent to a boarding school. The carriage drove up to the door, and he left, saying good-by to his cousins with a real feeling of regret. Just as he stepped into the carriage, his little negro valet appeared around the corner of the house, dragging a huge bag behind him.

"What's that?" exclaimed Mr. Wade Hampton Harrison.

The little servant dropped the bag suddenly and said, "It's our clothin', Marse Wade."

"Our clothing?" said Marse Wade. "Well, what are you doing with it?"

"Taking it along, Marse Wade. Yassuh, ain't I gwine with Buddie—I mean Marse Algy?"

"Of course not," answered Mr. Harrison. "You little rascal, you are not go-

ing anywhere. Your young master is going to boarding school."

"Yessir, but ain't I gwine too?"

With a swift glance, Mr. Harrison looked at young Algernon and saw that he too expected to take the little negro with him. "I am sorry," he said, "how did you make such a mistake? Well, anyhow it is impossible, and Algernon, my boy, you must hurry. It is eighteen miles to Natchez. You must drive well to get there before dark."

The little man got into the carriage and was driven suddenly away, while the negro child stood as though petrified, his feet glued to the earth, his eyes staring. Not a word he said. Young Algernon waved to him saying "Good-by" but the little negro stood motionless.

"I'll write you," called Algernon, but the little servant stood there as though paralyzed by grief and shock.

The young traveler disappeared into the distance. Only a cloud of dust was left behind, and the faint sound of the carriage wheels to be heard as they disappeared down the long road.

Dick stood there for minutes. Finally he threw himself down into the dust and dirt and cried, "Buddie! Buddie! Honey! My little Lamb! Marse Algy!" and cried as if his heart would break. Perhaps it did break. The next morning he was nowhere to be found.

# CHAPTER III.

## ROSA GORDON.

Helen, thy beauty is to me
  Like those Nicean barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
  The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
  To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
  Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy naiad airs have brought me home
  To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
  How statue-like I see thee stand,
  The agate lamp within thy hand,
Ah! Psyche, from the regions which
  Are Holy Land!

—Edgar Allan Poe.

T dusk the next evening Algernon was called from his room in the school to see the head master. He was lonely and tired and wondered what the teacher could want with him at that hour. He walked down the aisle slowly and

knocked on the teacher's door, and said timidly, "You sent for me, sir."

"Come in," answered the teacher. "Yes, I sent for you. There is an extraordinary looking person here to see you."

Touching a bell, he summoned a servant and said "Send him in."

Algernon was startled—he could not imagine who would come to see him there. In a moment the door opened and in walked the little valet, literally tattered and torn, for his clothes were torn and his feet were bleeding.

"Buddie, Buddie!" he exclaimed, throwing his arms around his young master. "I had to come, Buddie. I walked most of the way and got lost. Caught on to a wagon and fell off in the briar bushes. Stumped my toe and slept all night under the trees. I run away 'bout two hours after you left and here I is."

After Algernon had greeted the little negro affectionately, the two children stood there hand in hand, gazing into the eyes of the teacher pleadingly. The

teacher suppressed a smile and said, "You intend to stay here, I presume."

"Yessir, Yessir—I don't know sir. I'se scared to death, sir, but I jus' had to see Buddie."

"Buddie," said the teacher, "is your young master, I imagine. Well, you deserve to be with him after so long a trip. I will see."

"Henry," he said to the butler, "Take this boy to your house and see that your wife treats him well. He can help you bring in the wood. He's a nice little nigger."

Smilingly, the little valet followed the butler out of the room into the yard, fairly beaming with joy because he could be near his master.

. . . . . .

Several years passed—the usual years for a school boy, with the vacation spent at Everton, where Algernon was happy and beloved. Each year he grew handsomer as he developed into young manhood, and his manners were so perfect, his mind so keen, his heart so kind, that he commanded respect wherever he

went. The Wade Hampton Harrisons gave him the name of Prince, and he was known throughout the neighborhood as 'Prince Nichol.' He fenced brilliantly, was a splendid sportsman and was a picturesque figure indeed. But, beneath all of these manly qualities, Prince Nichol was a dreamer, a poet at heart. The poet expressed himself in music. He was a natural musician—a violinist—and, though his musical education was neglected, his playing was exquisitely beautiful, because of the soul quality in it. His natural technique made his playing a simple and beautiful thing. His spare hours were spent in practicing on his violin, and reading Alexandre Dumas. He still loved Napoleon with a sublime fervor. What a marvelous personality he was, of love, chivalry and courage!

Many women adored him, but he was indifferent to them. He confided to his Cousin Mary that he had seen a beautiful woman, with brilliant dark eyes and

black hair ride swiftly past the school near Natchez.

"I tried to find out who she is, and I go to many places with the hope of meeting her, but I have never seen her, Cousin Mary. Only once, she dashed past the grounds, looked up imperiously, spurred her horse and dashed down the road."

"Down," said his cousin. "And she is dark, young, beautiful, a good horsewoman? I wonder if it is Rosa Gordon. She visits near Natchez."

"Rosa Gordon!" exclaimed Algernon. "What a pretty name. "Who is Rosa Gordon?"

"Oh, *THE* Gordon family. You know who they are. Perhaps you would not like her, however, if you knew her. She is brilliant, sarcastic and imperious, and often at the expense of others. She is arrogant and a little domineering, I fear. I know her."

"You know her, Cousin Mary?" he asked eagerly. "If she, my dream, my woman, the woman I love is Rosa Gordon, I . . . "

"You love? I thought you had only

seen her once," answered his cousin.

"Yes, only once, but that was enough, and she looked at me and smiled, and what a smile. Half daring, imperious, swift, just for a second, she looked at me, and then a little smile crept over her face. Such a sweet expression. Oh, yes, Cousin Mary, she is sweet. Back of the arrogance is love, and that makes her sweet. I love her, Cousin Mary. Ask her to dine here at once, won't you?"

"Of course, I shall. I will write her tomorrow."

"Oh, no, write her today, and I'll send the letter by a messenger. Ask her to dine tomorrow."

The letter was written. The negro valet Dick saddled the fastest horse in the stable, and was off in a minute, off to Homewood, the home of the Balfours, where Rosa Gordon visited. Eighteen miles was a long ride of a gallop, but Dick rode on as though it were a matter of life and death, for he knew by the commanding look in his master's eyes when he said, "Hurry, Dick—deliver this letter at once, Miss Rosa Gordon,

Homewood, the Balfour residence, hurry,"—he knew that there was no time to be lost.

When night came on, it grew dark quickly and Dick, who still believed in ghosts, spurred his horse to a run as he was enveloped in shadows made by the great oak trees. On and on he rode, and finally he reached the Balfour residence. He jumped off the horse and knocked on the door. A negro butler, whom he knew, opened the door. He looked at the horse and at Dick, who both seemed to be in a state of exhaustion, and he said, "What's the matter? Is someone ill—someone dead? I hate to give it to Miss Rosa if it's bad news."

"Oh, no, it's nothing," said Dick, "jes' love."

"Jes' love," said the old butler. "My Gawd—at this hour of the night. Well, I'll take it in anyhow. Miss Rosa will be bored to death with jes' love. She got brains; she got no time for foolishness."

. . . . . .

Rosa Gordon was sitting in the drawing room reading a Life of Pythagoras.

The letter was handed to her—she took it in a casual way and opened it. It said:

"My dear Rosa:

Will you dine with us tomorrow at 8:00? I want you to meet my cousin, Algernon Emmett Nichol, a handsome, gallant boy, of whom you have heard me speak. Come prepared to visit. It is a long drive and quite fatiguing. Come and stay as long as you will.

With best wishes, and hoping to see you, I am

Sincerely,
Mary Nichol Harrison."

"Bring my portfolio," Rosa Gordon said, and she wrote this:

"My dear Mrs. Harrison:

I am so sorry not to dine with you tomorrow, but I am leaving for Louisiana. As to your handsome cousin, I am sure I would not like him. I do not care for young men, as you know. They bore me unmercifully. I prefer the companionship of more sophisticated individuals, and for this, am

doubly sorry not to visit you, as I remember your brilliant husband with much delight and you, always with love and appreciation.

Rosa Gordon."

The letter was given to Dick, who sensed the indifference and reluctantly accepted the letter which was to bring pain to his master.

"I'se gwine to leave my horse here," Dick said to the old butler, "and take one ub yourn."

"All right," he said, pointing to the stable. "Take a good one; it's all right with Marse Balfour, but don't take Miss Rosa's horse—her's is de black one."

"All right," said Dick, "Anyone will do goin' home."

Slowly, wearily, he rode back over the road to Everton. At daylight he was home.

"I wonder if Marse Algy is up." But as he said this, he caught sight of a light burning in the window of his master's bedroom.

Dick rode up under the window slowly.

"Buddie—Honey—Marse Algernon, I mean,—yo' there?"

"Yes, of course, come up. The door is open."

Slowly Dick entered the room. "It—the letter—is to Miss Mary," he said, "Not to you, suh."

"Yes, I know," said Algernon eagerly. "My cousin told me to read it. It is all right."

He tore the letter open, glanced over the page quickly. The letter fell to the floor. After a moment, he said, "Thank you, Dick. You may go now, and here's the key to the cellar. Go and get yourself a good drink—you need it. And here, Dick, take a cigar. And—never mind, that's all, Dick."

"Good night, suh. Sleep well, suh. It's nearly mornin', suh."

"Thank you. You may go now, Dick."

The servant walked reluctantly away, knowing that his master was unhappy. Algernon Nichol walked toward the

window. After a moment, he crossed the room again and picked up his violin. "It will not awaken them," he said to himself. With this he began playing a long, plaintive strain, something that he had composed himself. As he did, he saw the day break but he noticed that the sun was slow in coming up. The sun did not come up that morning.

# CHAPTER IV.

## NEWS.

"War is a breaking of the law, for the first law is to love one another."

ALGERNON NICHOL walked into the breakfast room in a depressed mood.

"You must not take it so seriously. You do not know her yet, and it may not be Rosa Gordon, after all, who rode past the grounds," said his Cousin Mary tenderly.

"I know," answered Algernon, "I know it is Rosa Gordon."

Just then Mr. Payne Green was announced. He stepped in for a mint julep. Drinking a toast of some original kind to Algernon, he said, "Very soon I believe you will have a chance to use that sword of yours in real earnest. It is just a question of days now when you will be called to fight for your country. Your gallant sword will make havoc with the Yankees."

"Yes," answered Algernon absent-mindedly, "I shall be glad to go."

"Yes, of course, all young men are happy in going to War."

"Not only that, but he is in love," said his cousin, teasingly, "and with a girl he has only seen but once, and that at a distance."

"Splendid," said Mr. Green, "real romance, I love it. I knew you were a poet from the moment I saw you, and cavalier too. It is magnificent. I am proud of you."

"He reads Alexandre Dumas' 'The Three Musketeers,' and he rides like hell," said Wade Hampton Harrison, then, glancing at his wife, he said, "I beg your pardon. I am speaking of our Prince here."

"Yes," answered Mary solemnly, "It is really quite beautiful. He only saw her once."

"He scarcely saw her at all," laughed her husband.

"Do not laugh, Wade, you know it was love at first sight with us."

"Yes, but I had a good look at you,

and I did not commit a crime in trying to see you."

"Perhaps you would, if it had been necessary."

"Perhaps," said her husband, "but I did not hurt my two best friends."

"Best friends?" said Algernon questioningly.

"Yes, your horse and Dick. Dick rode so fast that he nearly ended the life of that horse I gave you, and his own, incidentally."

"I am sorry about the horse, Cousin Wade. I am sure he is badly done up after the ride."

"D'Artagnan," said Mr. Green, "of course, how would you expect him to enjoy life without romance and a fast ride?"

"A wonderful night, a beautiful woman," said Mr. Harrison, as he handed Algernon a mint julep. "Drink it my boy, you need it. Brace up,—you're young, you know."

Just then a rider dashed up to the door. He dismounted and walked out

to the dining room as though perfectly at home.

"Oh, it is my brother Bob, I guess," said Mr. Green. "What brings you here, and in such a hurry? Another cavalier, I suppose."

He was beginning to joke with his brother, but noted the serious expression on his face, and saw that he was very white.

"It's war, Payne, war. I am off at once; thought I would say good-by to Mrs. Harrison."

"War," said Algernon, and then sprang forward and called a servant.

"War," he said again to himself. "Thank God—get my horse, Dick, hurry. I'm off with Mr. Green."

Turning to his cousin, he said, "I am going to Natchez to enlist at once."

It all happened in a minute it seemed, for the two young riders dashed down the long drive, and were off before Mary Harrison could speak. She stood and watched them disappear. Wearily, she turned. She seemed to have grown

old in that one moment—a moment of swift, keen realization.

"War," she said, "how horrible. Brother against Brother."

"It is life," said her husband, catching her expression, "and it is right. All of this hypocritical talk about ethical appeal, justice, freedom. There is no freedom, except for the man who has the calibre, the ability to earn it, and to preserve it. A negro is by nature inferior, and one cannot beat nature. The basis of this whole trouble is jealousy. The Yankees are jealous of our success, our independence, our aristocracy, our peace. A Yankee is a tradesman. He instinctively dislikes the aristocrat. Our imperialism is mistaken for cruelty, our dignity for coldness, our peace for inertia.

"We are not understood," he continued. "We are not by nature cruel. Why should we be accused of being cruel to our servants, our slaves? And what did the Yankees do to the Indians? Did they show them any mercy? Here we live in peace, in joy. We are too

happy. Our existence annoys them—these Yankees. And a Yankee has no real chivalry. He is too busy with business. He is selfish and domineering."

"Don't say that, Wade," said his wife. "You know that we have many friends in the North, and that they are very charming people. There are nice people everywhere."

"Yes, Mary, you find beauty everywhere, because you are beautiful yourself." Kissing her, he said, "Go in, dear, I want to discuss these Yankees with Payne. Please go in dear, or I shall say what I said a few minutes ago in your presence, and I do not wish to."

Hours passed. Mary Harrison sat in her room gazing at the sky. Once in a while she would say aloud—"War"—"and we are taught to love one another. Why do we not follow blindly, respectfully, that teaching, that law? It is so simple and practical. If we did follow it, there could be no war."

Then she said to the old servant as she entered the room, "My dear boy

has gone away. My gallant, beautiful boy. He is so brave. I wonder if he can be patient. There is great virtue in patience. When the war is over perhaps Rosa will have changed, and will have learned to like young men, and we shall all be happy. When it is over, we shall all be happy."

"Yes, Miss Mary, we're goin' to be happy. We're not goin' to let dem Yankees interfe'e with our happiness. I'se wonder why dey'se tryin' to interfe'e with it now. Dey got no manners, —dat's what I got against dem," said the servant in loyal tone, as she waited upon her mistress.

"War is a breaking of the law, for the first law is to love one another," said Mary Harrison. "How horrible it is—this breaking of the spiritual law!"

# CHAPTER V.

## WAR.

"I love the South! It is a part of this Union. I love every foot of its soil, every hill and valley, mountain, lake and sea and every man, woman and child, that breathes beneath its skies. I am an American."

—Abraham Lincoln.

UNDER General Beauregard, Algernon Emmett Nichol fought bravely. As young as he was, he was almost immediately made a lieutenant, often acting as captain. Though a mere boy he was the leader of one of the Forlorn Hopes, after which he was captured and sent to Johnston's Island, where he was to remain until the end of the war.

Hope shattered, his one great ambition, which was to become a leader, a military man of real power, was lost forever.

The capture happened in this way: He heard that Rosa Gordon was to be at a dinner given near Natchez. He

and his friend, Jimmy Johnston, determined to go to the dinner at any cost. They were warned that there was danger of capture, but love knows no fear, and true friendship follows on to the end, so Jimmy Johnston happily went with his friend, with full realization of their danger.

The young soldiers dashed through the gate of Homewood and were soon ushered into the dining room, where Rosa Gordon was a guest.

She appeared in her usual regal splendor and radiance, wearing a sun colored gown of marvelous beauty. In her arms were some yellow roses. Her dark hair was elaborately dressed in Egyptian style, and as she sat there in her regal beauty, Algernon Nichol fairly reeled for a moment, for it was the woman he loved, the one who rode past the grounds, leaving him with but one thought, his love and admiration for her.

He was presented to Rosa Gordon. She scarcely noticed him. She seemed entirely indifferent to her surroundings;

like some queen, weary with her subjects, her admirers, her throne. His attentions were in vain; she scarcely seemed to be conscious of his presence. She talked most of the time to Mr. Balfour, her host, who was one of the older men whom she admired.

In the midst of some brilliant story, there was a sudden rush, a noise, a sound of riders. In a moment, the door flew open and the dining room was filled with men in blue.

A young officer walked up to Captain Johnston and then to Algernon Nichol, and took their swords. It was too late for escape. They were captured.

As Algernon walked bravely away, he stopped and said, "May I have one moment, Officer? One moment only, you can trust me."

"Oh, very well," said the officer.

Walking back to the table, he said calmly and quietly, "Miss Gordon, I shall think of you often. To have seen you, even for this brief hour, was worth

it. I go happily, willingly. I have no regret."

She looked at him in a puzzled way. "I do not understand. A dinner is scarcely worth so severe a trial, and I am sure the guests all regret your misfortune."

"They ought to revel in my fortune," he said gallantly. "I am the most fortunate man in the world to have seen you, even for an hour."

"You're very kind," she answered, as the officer stepped forward and said, "One moment you asked for; we are off now."

Algernon kissed Rosa Gordon's hand and said, "May I have one of your roses?' 'These roses from the sun,' " he added tenderly.

"Certainly, with pleasure." Taking a yellow rose, she gave it to him.

He kissed her hand again, and thrust the rose in his vest pocket. Placing his hand upon his heart, he bowed gracefully and left the room.

. . . . . .

Three years of loneliness, suffering and privation passed, for Algernon Nichol and his gallant friend were imprisoned on Johnston's Island. For hours Algernon played upon his violin. Sometimes he composed pretty pieces, mostly romantic, but once he wrote a little waltz—the Johnston Island Waltz, it was called—which afterwards was known throughout the South. after the terrible days were over.

Often he said to his friend, "No war, no political system can change us or eradicate the habit of fighting. No statesmen, no country. The change will have to come through evolution, and this evolution must spring from an ethical system. It is for the Mothers of the coming race to create this system, to inculcate and develop love among children, so that any form of unkindness or strife will be regarded as a breaking of the law, the law of love—violence to be regarded as criminal. Only when there is a full realization of the power and efficacy of the teachings of the great masters will there be peace and a

true brotherhood of man. The Church, the fraternity, the cult, is of no avail, if it does not insist upon the fundamental principle, which is love. This will change the world, and nothing else.

. . . . . .

The surrender of that glorious gentleman and general, Robert E. Lee, with its pathetic, yet divine dignity, will remain in the minds of all fair thinkers as a symbol of true courage and pride.

When the young soldiers imprisoned were released, they beheld their beloved country in ashes. They, too, displayed the fine courage to which they were born. Utterly untrained for business methods, they adapted themselves to the new conditions quickly and consistently.

. . . . . .

When Algernon Emmett Nichol rode up the long drive to Everton four years later, older in years, a serious man, a soul mature in wisdom, it was in the deep of night that he saw a light from

the old home. It was very late, and he thought that someone must be ill, for there was only one light.

He rode up to the house, sad and fatigued, and a little startled by the light. He did not know that his faithful servant Dick slept on a rug at his door, refusing to go home to his cabin.

"I'm sho he am acomin' tonight, Miss Mary," he would say night after night. "Mos' all the young gentlemen are back now, and anyway I'd rather sleep and wait for him if you don't mind, Miss Mary, and it's safer for you too, Honey, with all dese upstart niggers carrying on 'round de country, and poor Buddie been eatin' hard tack and nuthin' to cheer him but his music. It's a good thing Buddie liked music Miss Mary, and I guess he's been composin' things for Miss Rosa. I wish Miss Rosa would jest buss out and fall in love wid Buddie. He sho loves that lady and Lawd, Miss Mary, how can you blame him? She sho looks like a queen. Buddie, Marse Algy, I mean, don't mind her grand ways—sort of meanlike though—

'cause he done told me all about Cleopatra. He says she is jest like dat queen on de Ribber Nile. And he don't like anythin' common. You know how he is about horses and dogs and clothes and everythin'. It's jes natural. Dat am de Eastern Sho' of Maryland in him. Ole miss, his ma, was jes de same, and I sho was scared of her. But I liked her jes the same."

"Yes," said Mary Harrison. "Yes, Dick, but Miss Rosa does not like young men and it's hopeless."

"You ax her out here, Miss Mary, an' if Buddie can get her to sit under dat big magnolia tree, and one of dose white blossoms falls down on her heart, I'se sho she's goin' to love Buddie. I done seen it in a dream."

"Yes, Dick, and I know you believe in dreams. But put out the lights, Dick, and lock the doors. Your master will not be here at this hour. He would spend the night in Natchez with friends and come out in the morning."

"Yes'm," said Dick. "You'se right. I'll lock up, but I'll jes go up and wait

in his room, jes the same, if you don't mind."

Bowing respectfully, he said, "Good night," and he went up to the room which his master had occupied. He sat by the window. He could hear wheels passing by occasionally, then a dog barking at the moon, and screech owls in the distance.

Finally he fell asleep in a chair, but in a few moments he awakened suddenly. He heard a horse outside. Going to the front window he saw a shadowy figure riding slowly up the drive.

"It can't be Buddie," he said to himself. "He nebber rides so slow as dat. It mus' be bad news."

"Oh, Lawd," he said, "I hope it ain't nothin' about him."

The rider drew nearer and Dick heard a voice say "Go along."

"It *is* Buddie! 'Cause Buddie never say 'Giddup,' He always sez 'Go along.' Jes like he never sez 'Shut up.' He jes say 'Be quiet!' "

Running out of the room, down the

long stairway, he fairly flew out of the door.

"Buddy, Honey, Marse Algy, the Lawd be praised!"

"How do you do, Dick," said his master solemnly, "I am glad to see you."

"And I'se sho glad to see you, sir. Is you tired? Jes come on in. I done got somethin' to cheer you up. The Yankees bust all de bottles in de cellar dey thought, but I grabbed one bottle and buried it under de magnolia tree."

Taking the horse by the bridle, he led him to the stable.

"Go on in, Marse Algy. I'll feed the horse, and be back in a minute wid de bottle."

"All right, Dick," said the master wearily. "I see that you are here. Where are the other servants?"

"Oh, dey're all heah, down in de cabin. Only dem good fur nuthin' niggers, ran away. Some of dem back, already. And de Marse and Missus, dey're well too."

"Yes, I know. I asked about them in

Natchez, but very unhappy, I hear. I dread seeing them unhappy."

"I'll go up and wake dem, Marse Algy."

"No, don't, Dick. I do not want to disturb them, and am dead tired anyway. It's just as though my soul has gone out of my body."

"Well, if it's gone, Buddie, I'se know where it's gone. Not meaning any disrespect in mentioning de lady, but I knows you wants to hear about Miss Rosa. She's well and still beautiful, but doesn't ride any more. Dem Yankees stole her horse. She drives now and looks very unhappy. I s'pose 'cause she's not used to goin' slow—drivin' slow horses."

"Yes, yes," said the soldier, "but bring in the bottle, Dick. I hope it's whiskey."

"Oh, it's whiskey all right, sir, and straight from Kentucky. You jes' wait —I'll be back here in a minute."

Running out into the yard, he grabbed a spade and dug eagerly in the ground and came back with the bottle and a glass.

Taking the bottle, the soldier poured out a glassful and drank it down.

"Get another glass, Dick."

"Yessir."

Pouring another glassful, the soldier said, "Drink it, Dick. You need it, too."

"Oh, no, Buddie, honey, Marse Algy, I done saved it all fo' you."

"Yes, I know, but drink to me—to my health."

Taking the glass, Dick bowed and held the glass high. "I'se jes' a nigger, but I'se wise and I drinks a toast and here 'tis: 'Here am to de queen ob de Ribber Nile, and to de handsomest gentleman in de country side."

"Thank you, Dick. That's enough."

"You don't mind my talkin' about her. We knowed each oder so long and fore you shuts me up, I wants to give you some advice. When she comes out here, ax her to sit on de bench under de magnolia tree. You ax her there to be your wife, and jes' as you do, one ob de white blossoms am goin' to fall down on her heart, and turn it into love. I

done seed it, Buddie, in a dream, and I'se talked to de moon about it, too."

"The moon?"

"Yessir. And Liza she made a wish to de new moon jes last month."

"Thank you, Dick, but I'm so tired. I'll be off to bed. See you tomorrow."

"Yessir, but I'se gwine to fetch you a sandwich, and then goin' to bed myself. I ain't been in bed for a month."

"What's the matter, Dick?"

"Been sleepin' on de floor, Buddie. Jes waitin' for you to come home."

"That's kind of you, Dick. I appreciate it. Thank you."

"Don't thank me, Buddie. You knows I'se never gwine to leave you, war or no war, and I never did like Yankees. Always meddlin' in other people's business!"

"Yes, Dick, but it is over now."

"No, Buddie, it's jes' beginning! That's de trouble. I seen strange, white figures riden' in de night. I seen dem in a dream and dat's a bad sign. We gwine to have terrible times, and they jes' beginnin,' now! . . ."

# CHAPTER VI.

## THE MAGNOLIA TREE.

"Even today more than six hundred millions of human beings believe in the pre-existence of the soul, in successive lives and reincarnations."

—Maeterlinck.

ROSA GORDON drove slowly and imperiously up the long drive to Everton. The host and hostess stood at the head of the steps, having come out to greet her. She walked up, and spoke to them solemnly.

"So glad to see you again," she said, trying to smile.

"So glad to see you, Rosa. It is a great pleasure," said Mary Harrison.

Then Rosa, holding out her long, beautiful hand to her host, whom she admired, smiled graciously. He kissed her hand and said, "It will be nice to talk to you again."

"And how is Mr. Payne Green?" she asked eagerly. "You know this habit of mine of liking older men—but quite

properly, of course," she added. "I like their mature minds. Young men are so uninteresting."

"We have a young man here, Rosa. Be kind to him. He is really so nice." This Mary Harrison said quite eagerly.

"I will take you to your room," she added. "Not so many servants as usual, Rosa. Only the cook and Dick left; the others are scattered about the country, you know. This terrible war! What awful things have happened to us."

"Yes," said Rosa, "but we must not think of it, if possible."

"Shall I dress for dinner?" she added. "I never feel like dressing these days. It does not seem a fitting thing, somehow. But I brought along an old dress. I will wear it if you wish me to do so."

"I will wear it. I suppose it won't show much in the candle-light, but it is cheerful."

"Yes, dear, wear it. Rest now and come down a little later."

. . . . . .

In an hour dinner was announced. It was a delicious dinner, but different from the former dinners given at Everton. No silver, no wine, very little cut glass, but numbers of flowers, roses of every color.

A tall distinguished figure appeared in the doorway, "I am sorry to be late, Cousin Mary, forgive me."

"Certainly, Algernon," answered his cousin. "You have met Miss Gordon, I think, in Natchez?"

"Yes," answered Algernon, "I have had that pleasure."

Going up to Rosa Gordon, he kissed her hand solemnly. He noticed that she wore no rings, and that she was much less haughty than formerly.

"She, too, has lost, has suffered," he thought. "She is changed, but still beautiful."

Just then her host said, "I think, Rosa, that this is the young man who carried a yellow rose into battle." This he said jokingly.

Rosa Gordon said, "Really, how interesting," in an indifferent tone, while

Algernon looked at her searchingly to find some response to his great love and keen interest. He was confronted with a face which conveyed nothing, neither love nor pity.

The dinner was over, there was a sombre, shadowy atmosphere about everything, and there was a deep silence. The only bright thing in the tall room was Rosa Gordon's gown. It looked like a huge flower from the sun, some great rose with its petals closed beautifully and firmly.

After coffee was served, Algernon was persuaded to play upon his violin.

"But I have no accompanist," he said, looking at Rosa Gordon.

"True art needs no accompaniment," Rosa Gordon responded abruptly and looked at him daringly, as though wishing to test his skill.

"You are right. I shall play alone."

Now, Rosa Gordon played the piano well, and he knew it, but he also knew that she wished to place him in an awk-

ward position, and that she wished to listen and criticize his playing.

Taking his violin, he walked across the room and stood by the window. "I will play something from DeBeriot, an Air Varié."

Placing his violin under his chin, and standing with unconscious dignity, he began to play the Air Varié. This particular composition displayed his natural technique.

"Play the Carnival de Venice," Rosa Gordon said as he finished.

"Or Fisher's Hornpipe," said Wade Harrison jokingly.

He played the Carnival de Venice in finished style.

"That is splendid," said Rosa Gordon. "I like your technique."

"You would like his soul if he played one of his own compositions," said his cousin tenderly.

"Oh, play Annie Laurie," interrupted her husband.

"Play the things I like, Algernon. They are best."

"Yes, Cousin Wade, in a moment. I

know you want something jolly, but first I must play a little piece for Miss Gordon."

He began a beautiful thing of his own, expressing the depths and pathos, the passion, yet exquisite refinement of his soul. Slowly he let his bow drop to his side, almost unconsciously. He was so lost in his reverie. There was a full minute of silence. There was a tear in Mrs. Harrison's soft, blue eyes. Wade Harrison coughed and made some futile remarks to break the silence, while Rosa Gordon sat motionless, proudly, firmly determined not to show the least emotion. But when she tried to speak, her voice faltered. It seemed to go away from her entirely, while Algernon stood looking into her eyes with a look that expressed his beautiful story, one of true love, deep suffering and courage.

In a few moments the host and hostess left the room. Wade Harrison said to his wife in a whisper, "He has won, I tell you. He has got her, Mary, this time. See if I am not right. That piece—those eyes—the silence—the can-

dle-light—the perfume from the garden. See if I am not right."

"I hope so," said his wife quietly. "I feel so sorry for him, poor boy. I hope she won't be too haughty with my dear boy. He has suffered so terribly. But Rosa is so proud and she has never loved anyone. She only knows admiration."

. . . . . .

The next evening after dinner Algernon took the advice of his servant, for he knew that servants have a particular wisdom and psychic power of their own. It was just at dusk. He took Rosa Gordon for a walk in the garden. On the way back to the house, he asked her to sit down a minute and talk to him.

"Certainly," she said indifferently. "I will sit here. It is very pretty."

"Not so pretty as over there," said Algernon timidly.

"Really," said Rosa, "I see no difference. The whole garden is beautiful." But she walked on with him as it did not matter where they sat.

Sitting calmly on the bench which he had drawn her to, under the magnolia tree, he told her briefly of his great love. He was afraid to look at her, afraid of her answer, which he might see in her face.

She said nothing for minutes. Finally she said in a strange voice, "You are the first young man I ever liked."

"Did you say 'liked,' Rosa?"

"Yes, 'liked.' Why not?"

"I do not like the word very much. Why do you not tell the truth? Why do you not say that I am the first young man you ever loved?" This he said impulsively, for somehow, although a minute before he had been uncertain, a keen, telepathic communication had been established between them—all in a second.

"It is of no use," she said, "and I am too tired to keep up this pretense. The day I rode past the grounds, although I only saw you for a second, I felt that I must ride back and speak to you. I never forgot you. I was so happy to

see you in Natchez, but I did not want you to know."

"Why not, Rosa, why not? Why did you not give me some sign. It would have made the terrible days on Johnston's Island more bearable."

"It is my way," she said. "I cannot give in about anything. I never did before."

Looking at her he said, "Rosa, may I kiss you? Your hand, I mean." Taking her hand, he kissed it.

"When you are my wife, I may kiss your lips, if I may have the honour to call you my wife?"

She did not answer. She seemed lost in some strange reverie. But, taking his hand calmly, she said, "Those words bring back a memory, a strange, beautiful memory—something vague, something of some other world. You have said those same words to me before. In a former life, perhaps. In some other country. In Egypt, I think."

"And what was your answer, in Egypt?"

"It was—it was this: 'It is an honour to love you.' "

"And what do you say now, Rosa?"

"It is an honour to love you *again*."

Just then a large, white magnolia blossom fell at her feet. Looking tenderly at the blossom, she said, "Life is like that. We live but to die and to live again." . . .

# CHAPTER VII.

## A WEDDING.

How silently serene a sea of pride!
How daring an ambition, yet how deep!
How fathomless a capacity for love!
—Edgar Allan Poe.

 ON'T you stay and be married here, Rosa?" said Mary Harrison lovingly. "Your dear ones are gone, and you have promised to marry at once, you know—to marry my beautiful boy. And it is a war romance—you must not be conventional. Let us drive over to the little church at Church Hill. It will make my dear boy so happy."

"You are right, Mrs. Harrison, and he needs me, I think. Let us surprise him."

"Shall we tell him that you will go tomorrow to the little church? Just the four of us, and perhaps Mr. Payne Green?"

"Yes, do, dear Mrs. Harrison."

"You tell him."

"I cannot get out of the habit of not giving in. I really want to be married tomorrow or today—I do not care when—but you must tell him, not I."

. . . . . .

The next morning, at 11 o'clock, they drove over to the little church, accompanied by Mr. Payne Green, whose witty remarks and brilliant repartee created a merry drive to the church, in spite of the once beautiful homes they passed, now in ashes. Once in a while, Mary Harrison would close her eyes as she passed the home of some old friend, which was no longer home, and pretended not to see, so that no touch of sadness would creep into the day.

"And who do you suppose is going to marry you?" said Mary Harrison.

"Why, the Bishop, I suppose. I had not really thought."

"Oh, no. We hadn't time to get a Bishop. Jimmie Johnston is going to do it. Jimmy Johnston, you know, Rosa, was captured on your account, so feels that he must be in the wedding too."

"Oh, I see. He was the young man

who accompanied Algernon to the dinner at Natchez."

On and on they drove merrily. They reached the church, which was placed high upon a hill, surrounded by beautiful trees and numerous flowers.

"And who do you suppose, Rosa, is going to play at your wedding?" said Mary Harrison happily.

"Oh, I do not know, I am sure. Did you have time for music?"

Just then Katherine Balfour, whom Rosa Gordon had visited at Homewood, came down the walk from the church and waved her hand.

"I am here first, you see. Been practicing."

"I am going to play a lovely thing for you, Rosa," she said, as she kissed her beautiful friend. "I had a fearful time learning it in an hour."

"What is it, dear?" said Rosa.

"It's the little piece that Algernon played to you a few days ago. He sent it by Dick, who was glad to have a happy ride to Homewood."

"Oh, how kind you are—how kind

all of you are to me!" And this she said as she looked at Payne Green, who was still keeping up the bright spirit of the day.

"You have not much time, Rosa," said Wade Harrison. "We have got to get back for dinner, and I do not want our gallant Algernon to die here of heart failure before the ceremony. Please look at him. He is in another world. I don't think he hears a word that any of us are saying. Do you, Algernon?"

The young soldier did not answer, but looked at Rosa Gordon happily, and then the music from the organ began.

He offered his arm to Rosa in old-fashioned style, and they walked proudly up the aisle, while the others dropped noiselessly into a pew near the door.

Jimmie Johnston stood in the pulpit, and smiled as they stopped in front of him. A ray of sunlight fell upon Rosa Gordon and to the yellow roses she carried in her arms, creating a brightness, gloriously, undeniably beautiful.

"I never saw anything so handsome as those two—did you?" said Mary Har-

rison to her husband. "So magnificent —quite of another world, are they not?"

"But, why the yellow roses? I thought they would be white of course."

"Well, that is a story, and a pretty one, too," said Payne Green under his breath. "Rosa thinks the yellow roses symbolic, not only because of an instance in this life, but in some other. Her mind is not a bit Occidental, you know. She is an Oriental at heart. She believes in reincarnation."

"Do not talk," said Wade Harrison.

"Well, I cannot be quiet," said his wife. "I am so happy."

"Well, you must be, dear. You can talk after the ceremony."

There was a long silence. Only the love poem from the organ vibrated through the little church, which quite annihilated the words of the marriage ceremony, which was as they had wanted it—this young couple, so silent and dignified and exquisitely reserved. The music ceased. Katherine Balfour came down from the organ.

Kissing Rosa, she said, "You are won-

derful, and these roses, are they from the sun? So bright and beautiful. Just like you, dear."

"Thank you," answered Rosa. And then she said, quite solemnly, as though having said it many times before, "My husband loves them so."

"I suppose he loved them in Egypt," said Mr. Green.

"Well, it is beautiful to have you here, now, and I congratulate not one, but both."

# CHAPTER VIII.

## THE SYMBOL.

"The lotus, wherever it grows, is beautiful and pure."

—The Wisdom of the Hindus.

ONE year of perfect happiness, and then Rosa's own words became prophetic. Those words of hers were "Life is like that—we live and die, to live again!"

A little boy was born and died within one hour after its birth. It was placed on a white bed near the mother, and on its little body were placed many white flowers, one of which was a magnolia bud.

"Give me the magnolia blossom," said Rosa to her husband. "It is a symbol. Do you remember, dearest, what I said about life and death the night the white blossom fell at my feet?"

"Don't, don't, Rosa," answered her husband. "I can bear your illness, but the agony in your voice, your words,

I cannot bear. Do not speak, my beloved. It breaks my heart. . . . And our little boy," he added tenderly.

"And a Prince, too," said Rosa, "like you. If he only could have lived. My suffering was nothing, because he was to live . . . and now. . . ."

"I know, my dear one, but we have each other still."

"Yes, still," answered Rosa, with a strange look of fear on her face. And then she said, "Just still. . . ."

"Forever," said her husband, but Rosa did not answer.

After a long silence, she said, "Algernon, I must speak to you. They have not told you, but I must tell you, so that you may know in time. I am going to die, but I shall come back."

"Rosa, what do you mean? You cannot mean this. You cannot die, you are too bright for death. How can you speak this way to me? Why do you torture me? The doctor told me that you were quite safe, that everything was all right."

"I told the doctor to say that. I

wanted to tell you myself. I am dying, dearest, but I shall return."

Taking his hand in hers, she raised her head from the pillow. Looking into his eyes deeply, she said, "Promise me to marry again, promise."

"I cannot, Rosa. Do not ask such a thing. I do not understand. It would not comfort me, nothing, no one could. Do not speak of such desecration. And you cannot, you shall not die—do not speak of it again. The doctor is wrong—he must be wrong!"

Looking at him again, she said, "You must answer me quickly. Promise to marry. It is the only way—my way. Promise, dearest."

"I cannot, Rosa."

Placing her head upon the pillow gently, he then rushed to the door and called the doctor. "Doctor," he said, "come, come at once."

As he came into the door, a strange whiteness came over Rosa's face, but she said calmly, "Tell the doctor to go away. There is nothing to be done. I

wish to speak to you alone." This she said in a determined way.

Going back to her, he looked in her eyes and she said, "Promise, so that I can come back again and I shall. . . ." The last words slipped away.

She was gone. . . .

Algernon stood motionless, petrified by grief. As he glanced down at her hand, he saw that it held the magnolia blossom and the words seemed to whisper themselves into his ear, "Life is like that,—we live and die, to live again!"

# CHAPTER IX.

## DESPAIR.

"But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!"
—Tennyson.

FOR ten years Algernon Emmett Nichol lived a life of absolute seclusion. His grief was so deep, so consistent that his friends feared that he would develop melancholia. He seemed utterly indifferent to life. The years dragged on like centuries to him. He never played upon his violin, and whenever the magnolia flowers were in blossom, he went away where he could not see them. He spent his years on the old plantation, living with the Harrisons. They tried to cheer him, but in vain.

"But for my Cousin Mary," he said to Payne Green, "I would have ended it all long ago. But she has been so tender and kind. A hundred times I have courted death, yet death eludes

me, while my friends who wish to live have died. I cannot understand this riddle of existence. It seems to be a contrary scheme, a fate which takes away all the things one loves, forcing one to endure the things one does not love, to be tortured by loneliness, ennui."

"Some day," said his friend, "you will change, even forget. I say this in all reverence. And have you forgotten your promise to her?"

"I did not quite promise, and that was a fantastic idea—a hope of hers that I might be comforted. She could not have meant what she said, my friend. The very sight of other women is obnoxious to me. They are so insignificant in comparison to Rosa."

"Yes," said Payne Green. "But Rosa had strange beliefs, you know. At least they would seem strange to the Occidental world. She was an Eastern Scholar. I talked to her of such things even more than you. She believed firmly in reincarnation, as they do in the Orient, where it is practically a creed."

"I know, but it cannot be," said Algernon. "I can never love again, and marriage without love is hideous—it is impossible to me."

"Anyhow, I hope you do marry again, my friend. Yours is a lonely life. Forgive me for speaking to you in this way, but I know that Rosa would want it so."

"Yes, my life is lonely, but sincere and consecrated."

"Mrs. Harrison gives a dinner this evening, Algernon. Will you come to, please her?"

"No, I am going over to your house, if I may, to get away from it."

Just then Mary Harrison entered. "You will come down this evening, won't you? The most beautiful woman in the country, Mattie Watson, will be here. All the men admire her."

"I am sure they do, Cousin Mary, but please excuse me. I thank you, but I do not care to meet anyone."

"But it is ten years, my dear. Ten years, do you realize that?"

"Do I realize it, Cousin Mary? How can you ask that?"

"You ask him, Payne," said his cousin. "Perhaps you can persuade him."

"I have, but he is determined not to meet your friends."

"I am sorry, Cousin Mary," Algernon said in a commanding way. "Ask me anything else but this. I am going to ride over to Mr. Green's this evening. I hope that you will enjoy yourselves without me. I cannot be present. It is impossible."

. . . . . .

And then the days went on. The horrible reconstruction days still in existence, the hideousness of which can hardly be imagined, the radical changes, things reversed, distorted and incongruous. Life in the South became grotesque. The negroes who were once servants and slaves now were elected as judges, in power over the whites. The beautiful homes burnt to the ground. Others left standing like lonely monuments—white tombs to shelter dead hopes, anguish and wounded pride.

Yet the women smiled through their tears and the men adapted themselves to the new situation with courage, yet with one cry in their souls, "Our dead sweet South—our beautiful country of chivalry and love, dead, yet infinitely sweet!"

. . . . . .

The days of hardship and despair dragged. Gray days, with never the sun in the hearts of those left to look upon ashes. Even the birds seemed to feel the change. There was a stillness everywhere. The trees seemed to bow their heads in sorrow. The moon came up in some pathetic way, hanging listlessly in the sky!

Over the old plantation was a shroud, a gray phantom of death, for the old South was dead!

# CHAPTER X.

## A LADY WITH A FAN.

Who let me say is this stranger—regards me
With the grey eyes and the lovely brown hair?
—Matthew Arnold.

ANOTHER year passed. Eleven years since the death of Algernon Nichol's beautiful wife. Mary Harrison was giving another dinner-dance.

"You will come this time, won't you, Algernon?" she said pleadingly.

"He has got to come," said her husband. "I fixed it so he cannot get out of it. I am tired of begging him to come."

"Look here," he said, walking up to Algernon, "Read this." Holding out a letter, he said, "After you read this, you dare not refuse."

The letter read:

"My dear Mr. Harrison:

Your postscript added to Mrs. Harrison's letter will make me doubly eager to come to visit you on Thursday even-

ing. I accept your invitation with great pleasure. I have so often heard of the handsome Mr. Nichol, and look forward to meeting him.

Sincerely,

Mattie Hunt Watson."

"Well, you played a trick on me, Cousin Wade, and I will come, of course. But I will get even with you afterwards."

"Well," said his cousin, "I am willing for the 'afterwards.' You will thank me with all your heart. She is lovely, I tell you—a beauty. And rides splendidly. She is witty and accomplished, and is beautifully gowned. She wears roses—red roses—in her hair. A bit of a coquette, I think—uses her fan a great deal, and prettily."

"Is she tall and dark?" said Algernon, still picturing his wife in everything.

"No, she is petite, gray eyes, I think, and dark brown hair. Very white complexion. Tiny feet, adorable ankles."

"Well it sounds interesting. Of

course, you would see the ankles, Cousin Wade. Better watch him, Cousin Mary," he continued, "I think he is in love with her himself."

"Of course, I am. Mary knows that. All discriminating men are in love with Mattie Watson. I am for one, and Payne Green, and you will be when you see her."

"Well, to fascinate two such fastidious gentlemen proves that she must be unique, but leave me out of it. I will come, of course, but I am not the least bit interested."

. . . . . .

As Algernon Nichol walked up and down the veranda with his cousin, Jennie Phillips, from the Eastern Shore of Maryland, he said, "Jennie, who is the lady sitting there with Dunbar Shields at the end of the veranda?"

Jennie Phillips pretended not to see for a moment, for she did not want her cousin to meet one who promised to be a dangerous rival.

"Oh, I cannot see quite. I think it

is Mattie Watson. You have heard of her, I believe."

"Yes, yes—Cousin Wade admires her very much."

Just at this time Mattie Watson said to her cousin, Dunbar Shields, "Who is the handsome man walking there with Jennie Phillips?"

"I do not know. I cannot quite see," replied Dunbar Shields impatiently.

"Oh, I will point them out to you. She is wearing a blue dress. They are walking toward us now. Of course, you can see."

"Oh, yes, that is a friend of mine. He is known in the country as 'Prince Nichol.' He does not care for women, however, and for society. He has never been anywhere since his wife died, eleven years ago. This is his first appearance since her death. A beautiful woman she was—Rosa Gordon."

"What a rhythmical name—so strong. It attracts me."

"Yes," said her cousin, "they are walking this way. I think he wants to meet you."

Just then the couple stopped in front of them. "Mattie," said Jennie Phillips, "may I present my cousin, Mr. Nichol?"

Mattie Watson, holding out her tiny hand, said, "I've heard of you very often, Mr. Nichol. Mrs. Harrison, your cousin, is my very good friend."

Bowing in graceful fashion, Algernon said, "I have looked forward to this pleasure with keen anticipation."

Dunbar Shields got up suddenly and said, "Have my seat, Algernon. I am glad to see you again." This he said politely, but with a trace of resentment in his voice, for he dreaded the handsome man whom he feared would attract his cousin.

Jennie Phillips and Dunbar Shields walked slowly away, while Algernon Nichol took the chair by Mattie Watson, who held her fan gracefully. Her small hands moved the fan carelessly in some quaint fashion. Her very small feet peeped out from among the ruffles and lace of her black gown. A large, red rose was caught over her ear,

back of which was a Spanish comb. Around her shoulders was a black scarf of rare lace. The small fan was red, and at her waist was a buckle, which caught up some more roses. In the buckle were red stones, rubies, which flashed in the night. Her neck was strangely white, her lips red, her large, gray eyes heavily shadowed by long lashes, her nose was straight and turned up just a little bit, which gave a rather coquettish expression to her face.

"Will you walk with me, Miss Watson? I do not dance."

"With pleasure," she said, still using her fan prettily.

And then she said, "You do not dance. How can you resist a waltz? I love to waltz. It makes me think of Spain."

"Spain?" asked Algernon Nichol, and then he noticed again her gown with the Spanish lace, the red roses, the little fan.

"Yes," he said, "I can quite see why you would like to waltz."

They walked up and down the ve-

randa for some minutes, and then Dunbar Shields came to claim her for a dance, taking her into the ballroom.

Before she left, she said, "I have always admired the Spanish aristocracy. It appeals to me deeply, personally, somehow, I might say."

"Have you been in Spain?"

"No, I haven't. That is the strange part of it, and yet I love it so."

The waltz began, and Mattie Watson danced exquisitely, and, moreover, she knew it, and she knew that her new acquaintance was admiring her dancing from the veranda. As she danced past the windows, she looked up and saw him. She gave him a look, which was both a challenge and a confession. He looked at her, but did not smile. It was an earnest look, but he was in some kind of dream, for a moment, for this new personality brought some strange memory. It was both recognition and remembrance.

"Strange," he said to himself, "I feel that I have known her always."

When Mattie Watson finished her

dance, she walked up to her hostess and said, "Mrs. Harrison, I have met your cousin, and strangely enough, I seem to have met him before."

"Really, how interesting. I shall tell him. Perhaps you saw him at a ball in Natchez years ago."

"Oh, I was too young to go to balls years ago, Mrs. Harrison," she answered prettily, and then began using her fan.

"You are never without your fan, are you Mattie? This is a new one, evidently."

"Yes, do you like it? If you do, I will get you one in gray or white, perhaps."

"Thank you, dear, but I never use a fan. It takes a pretty woman to do that gracefully."

# CHAPTER XI.

## LETTERS.

### "When Knighthood Was In Flower."

DICK again took a hurried ride through the country, but this time to Huntley, and not to Homewood. He carried a letter and a huge bouquet of red roses. This was the answer to the letter:

"My dear Mr. Nichol:

It will give me pleasure to take the ride with you tomorrow evening. Thank you for the roses. They are beautiful.

Sincerely,

Mattie Hunt Watson."

Huntley,

April 17th."

A few weeks after that, Dick went back with another message, and this was the answer:

"Dear Mr. Nichol:

I have no engagement for this evening, and it will afford me pleasure to take the ride with you. The weather has been so bad that I was afraid it was destined for us not to have the race. Accept many thanks for the beautiful flowers. I assure you that they are highly appreciated.

Hoping to see you this evening, I am,

Sincerely,

Mattie Hunt Watson.

Huntley,
May 9th."

A few days after this, in answer to another letter, the faithful Dick brought this answer:

"My dear Mr. Nichol:

Your letter and the music were received and highly appreciated. I shall practice the accompaniment so as to be ready to play with you Thursday. Mother and I are going to Fayetts today. Your letter did not reach me in time to grant your request, the former one, I mean. I am glad to hear that you have enjoyed your visits to

Huntley. I was afraid that you had found them dull. You must come often, and I will do all in my power to make you have a pleasant time.

I will also take particular pains to practice and pay more attention to my music, so as not to be accused of practicing in your presence again, as Mother gave me the credit of doing the last time you were here.

It was very kind of you to send the violin over. It will be quite a treat to have you play.

Mother wishes to be kindly remembered to you. I shall expect you on Thursday.

Sincerely,

Mattie Hunt Watson.

Huntley,
May 14th."

Another letter:

"Dear Mr. Nichol:

Mr. Payne Green is coming for dinner, and we would be glad to have you with him. Do come up this evening at eight, and tell me that I am pretty.

Yours sincerely,

Mattie Hunt Watson.

Huntley,
May 26th."

One of his letters:

"I wish to present a handsome fan to a very handsome lady. She is seldom seen without a fan; in fact, it seems to be almost a part of her personality. She has however, the very extraordinary habit of partially, and at times almost entirely, concealing her face with her fan, when it is not in motion. Strange habit, is it not, for a pretty woman?

Algernon Emmett Nichol."

"Troy, Louisiana,
August 3rd,

My dear Mattie:

After leaving you on last Tuesday evening, I rode slowly along until my cigar went out, after which I scarcely knew how I got on, for loss of rest for the four or five previous nights—those sleepless, terrible nights until I knew your answer—combined with the long and fatiguing trip of the day, made the inclination to sleep irresistible, so, placing my hands on the pommel of the saddle, and grasping it firmly, I soon became oblivious of everything, and could only be brought partially to my senses when I would reel in my saddle so much

as to come near falling off, or my horse, by the irregularity and uncertainty of his movements in passing over bad places would force me to be more careful. I could, with difficulty, refrain from dismounting, hitching my horse and throwing myself right down on the ground, not only to sleep, because of my great fatigue, but for the hope of a dream of you. However, I stood it out, and arrived home after a two hour trip.

The next morning I had to go to Mr. Green's, where I remained all night, for the "Shaw" met with an accident,—both her rudders,—and failed to put in an appearance at the landing, having pushed up through the "cut-off." While waiting at the landing, I went into some old friends of mine, the Millers and the Brandons. As I was leaving, Jimmie Brandon said laughingly to me, "Look here, old fellow, Mississippi seems to agree with you. I thought you were living in Louisiana lately," and Mrs. Brandon quizzically added, "We hear that you are a great admirer of fans." I tried to laugh it off, but I fear that your desire to keep

our engagement secret will not be possible.

After a long tedious trip up the Mississippi, I got off at St. Joseph, and rode over to my plantation.

Dear, dear little woman, I do not believe that any man ever loved a woman as much as I love you. I am living quite in another world. When I am alone, I have my thoughts or dreams of you, and when I am with people, I am so restless and impatient that I am not myself. Whenever I can get away from them I either walk the gallery, or ride horse-back. I love with a wild and intense longing, which, when I see you, or even think of you, throws me into a state of ecstasy. It seems that I must throw aside every obstacle and go to you, and make you my wife now. But I have a duty to perform here, in which not only business, but honour is involved, and it means much to our future welfare. And I cannot give up and relax the reins, but must push ahead and force a successful issue, come what will.

I know nothing of your business, and it would be indelicate in me to attempt

to pry into it, but infer in a general way that it has not been successfully or satisfactorily managed of late, since your father's death. It shall be my aim and pleasure to work out your problems, but first I must work out the problems here, since they mean so much to both of us.

Today I have been riding in the cotton fields and how terrible the contrast here, alone, after having been in an Elysium of happiness. For a man to come down to reality, to the practical, after having spent two such delightful evenings with the prettiest little woman in the world, and that woman all his own, is something hard to bear, and something I do not fancy. I suppose it is a man's nature not to be satisfied, for the more he gets, the more he wants, and I will never be satisfied until I can get a pair of strong arms around you and call you all mine. Do you remember when I sat just beside you before leaving Huntley on Tuesday evening? I can never forget it. You caught me looking admiringly at your dress. You have the most exquisite taste in dress. You are beautiful in black, as I first saw you, more

beautiful in white, and I want to see you in pink the next time I come to see you. It is a severe test I am putting you to, but I believe you can stand it.

Yes, Mattie, I told you truly, in answer to your question, that I love you better than I have ever loved anyone. Heaven knows I mean no disrespect to the memory of the dead when I say this, for Rosa Gordon was superb and I loved her deeply, but perhaps there was more admiration than love, and she, like you, Mattie Watson, was a lady in whose veins flowed the bluest blood in the land. She was a splendid looking woman, brilliant and a true wife, but I was afraid to ask her to marry me. I felt the first time I ever saw you that I could ask you at once if I dared.

Heaven bless my little woman and make her always think of me.

Write often. Your quaint little letters mean everything to me now.

Algernon.

P. S. I have planted about 4,000 acres in cotton, which will bring me out all right, notwithstanding the high water. This is a big come-down from last year, but the situation is difficult.

Forgive this practical note, but you know the pot must boil.

I will go over next Thursday to Mr. Harrison's and will come to you at the usual hour. Do not ride that horrible horse again, I beg you.

Algernon."

"My dear Algernon:

Your letter reached me yesterday evening, the contents of which has made me the happiest little woman in the world. I consider that you have bestowed the greatest honour that a true nobleman can bestow upon a lady. Of course, you must have guessed long before you asked me to marry you that your feeling was reciprocated. I honour and respect you so much that I feel confident I will never regret the step I am taking. You ought not to have thought that I would ever flirt with you, for I never trifle with one's serious affections. If I had not been pleased with you, I would not have encouraged your visits here. I am going to Rodney this morning so you must pardon this short note. Do come over as soon as possible.

Mattie.

P. S. I miss you so. I cannot describe my loneliness since you left. Indeed, I am not happy except in your charming society. I really do not know what to do with myself when you are away. Of course, it is different with you, for you have business affairs to divert your mind. I love you so, my dear "Mr. Nichol." Somehow, I always think of you as "Mr. Nichol."

I am going to try to make you such a good little wife and your home so bright and happy that you will never cease to love me. If your feeling toward me should ever change, it would break my heart, but you will never hear one word of complaint or reproach from me.

I enjoyed the nice ride so much, and hope your horse was not injured in any way. You ride so splendidly. You are so brave and manly that I feel that nothing in the world can harm me, but I must confess I did have a hard time keeping up with you. I cannot imagine how a lady can fancy a frail, delicate man. I certainly prefer broad shoulders to lean upon. I take my fan out every

day and look at it, but I do not intend to use it until you come again.

I think Mother is more and more pleased with you every day. When she is convinced that you are kind to me, she will be very fond of you, I am sure. You know that I am her only daughter, and she has always idolized me, so it is natural for her to dislike the idea of giving me up to anyone.

This postscript is longer than the letter. It is the first long letter I ever wrote.

Your devoted,
Mattie.

Huntley,
August 6th."

"Dear Algernon:

I was out riding Saturday evening when the boy returned with the mail. I was so impatient to hear from you that I did not wait to get to the house to open your letter, but I rode along slowly and read it. If anyone had passed the road just then, it would have been amusing to see a lady reading a letter on horseback, especially on a horse who is so highly strung as mine.

It was very kind and noble of you to write me in regard to my religion. You know that I am a Convert, all of my family having been Episcopalian and Presbyterian. Many have thought that the Roman Catholic religion appealed to me on account of its artistic ritual, the rosaries, candles, incense, etc., but it is not so. I believe it to be the true and consistent religion.

Words are inadequate to express the great joy I feel in knowing that you respect my religion, and another thing that has brought me great joy is that you love me better than you did your first wife. That is a great compliment, since I have heard what a wonderful and superior lady she was. But I do not think it is possible for anyone to love you so naturally, so simply, as I love you, which I will prove to you in the years of devotion if we are spared.

Mattie.

Huntley,
September 8th."

Troy, Louisiana,
September 24,

"My darling little Woman:

I got back home by Sunday evening, after a long and disagreeable trip. Frequently on the way I would think of that ride of ours of the previous evening, and I felt as though I would give anything to exchange the one I was then having for it again. I have been so sad and depressed ever since I got back home, for I am lost without you and my love for you amounts to a frenzy. It is the separation, even though only for a few days, which is unbearable. Oh, little woman, if you only knew how my heart is filled with love and pride in thinking that you are soon to be my wife, and when you are, I shall find a thousand ways to make you happy always. This shall be my religion, to make happy the woman I love. It is the lover now who speaks. You will never know the husband in the conventional sense, for I shall always be the lover.

I sometimes think that I might bore you by my incessant protestations of love, but I cannot help it Mattie. You will forgive me, I know. Your letters

I love—they are like little messages from another sphere.

And, may I give you some advice? In your letter you spoke that there was a report that you wished to sell your property. This desire on your part should be kept as a secret, for if it is known that you wish to sell, it might occasion very considerable loss to you. Your manager might cease to interest himself in your business, and your laborers could, and doubtless would, harm you in many ways. Whenever there is a transfer of property, they invariably begin to pillage, tear-down and destroy.

Do not suppose for one instance that I am presuming to dictate to you, little woman. It is the hope that I may be of assistance to you by suggestion which prompts me to write in this way.

With my kind regards to your Mother, I am

Your devoted,

Algernon."

. . . . . .

"My dearest Algernon:

You speak in your letter of the possibility of boring me with your attentions.

That is impossible, I assure you. I only wish now that you had asked me to marry you the first night I met you. It would have been so perfectly natural, though unconventional, I presume.

It was kind of you to advise me about the plantation, and I shall be guided by your advice. You have such remarkable understanding of things, practical things, as well as artistic things. I am sure that you could never be wrong in anything.

After you left the last time, I went up to my room and shed a few tears. Now, do not laugh at me, for I tried my best to overcome this feeling of sadness, but did not succeed in doing so for some time. I generally look on the bright side of everything, and I am always so cheerful, that I cannot understand why I felt so strangely sad. Perhaps it is a premonition of some kind. You know that I have "second sight." My grandmother was a Scotchwoman —a Ferguson—and I have inherited this strange power from her. I shall be very uneasy about you until I hear that you arrived home without an accident.

These days, when you stay away from me, are such dreary blanks, I wish I could see you more frequently, but I could not insist upon it, as I must study your interest. Please do not expose yourself unnecessarily. Remember you have something to live for now, and I am a very important little lady, and you must obey orders.

Good-by, dear "Mr. Nichol" and do not fail to write soon to your devoted

Mattie.

P. S. One month from today we shall be married. Thank you for the red roses. It was sweet of you to think of me.

I am so thankful that you have given your consent for me to live at Huntley with my Mother, for she would be very lonely without me. I can go over the river with you sometimes, dear "Mr. Nichol," and when you are obliged to attend to business, you need not be surprised if I will want to go with you every time. The more I see of you, the more I want to see you.

I have written my great-uncle, Dunbar Hunt, about you, and he wants us to

visit him at Ft. Pendleton, Md. You know that I am related to the Pendletons, and it makes me think, apropos of this, that if we ask only relatives to our wedding, even then the house will not be large enough to hold them, for there are so many—the Marshalls, the Shields, the Balfours, the Pendletons, the Ogdens, the Archers, the Watsons, the Fergusons, The Dandridges, the—Oh, well, I cannot remember all of them, but I would like to ask some of them, but cannot manage it without offense to many. My Uncle Dunbar, of course, will be here. He has been at Berkely Springs enjoying the delightful baths. He is now at a place twelve miles from Oakland, a station on the B. & O. R. R., about three thousand feet above sea, on top of the Alleghany Mountains. The atmosphere is exhilarating, he says. The house is beautiful, formerly the country summer resort of Colonel Pendleton of Cincinnati, but is perfectly retired, and so like Huntley, he says.

I am sure that you are amused at this postscript. It is really another letter—is it not? Mattie.

Huntley,
October 1st."

. . . . . .

"My darling Husband:

I intend to send Amos up to town early in the morning just for the express purpose of getting the dear letter you promised to write me. There is no doubt in the world about my being deeply in love with my husband. Why, I am miserable when I am separated from him. It was as much as I could do yesterday to keep back the tears when I saw you ride off, but I know it is the duty of a good wife to study her husband's interests in every respect, and not to be a drawback, so I try hard to control my feelings, for it would be wrong for me to do anything to prevent you from attending to your business. You are so unselfish in allowing me to live with my Mother that I must not show my grief at our parting. No one in the world could be half so good as my darling.

Mr. Payne passed by Huntley one day last week and sent his love to you. I asked him to come often. I know it will give you pleasure to see your old

friends when you are on this side of the river.

Katherine Minor is coming to visit us next week. I do wish you could be here to meet her. She possesses that unusual combination of brains and beauty. Mother and I look forward to her visit with great pleasure. You know that her great-great-grandfather, Stephen Minor, was the first Governor of Mississippi, after the Spanish vacated, and was given the name of Don, on account of his kindness to the Indians.

You know how dearly I love Natchez, and I like to think of you there, at your shooting club, the Gilliard Club. It is, indeed, a rare treat to drive into Natchez, from Huntley, and pass the stately old homes, and I always associate them with you, especially the Prentiss home, Gloucester, where Rosa Gordon lived. Her sister, Mrs. Sargeant, is a delightful woman—in fact, all of the family are charming.

The Prentiss family, I know well, and I suppose it is quite a safe thing to say that S. S. Prentiss was one of the most brilliant orators of the country. You,

of course, think that no one ever talked so brilliantly as Robert Ingersoll. How beautiful Arlington is. You know it, of course—the Boyd residence. I am sure that Adams and Jefferson Counties are unique in their brilliant and aristocratic families. I remember hearing my father say that one had to be clever, indeed, to fence mentally with his friends in Natchez.

Sometimes I think, if one could write down the quick repartee, the gracious, chivalrous answers, that a famous book could be written, easily and intelligently. Of course, I think no one can equal Mr. Payne Green, even if he is not so famous as S. S. Prentiss and Robert Ingersoll!

As I write, a South wind blows the perfume from our garden. It is a divine combination of roses, hyacinths, violets and every imaginable shrub. The orioles are singing beautifully, today. They seem so happy, as they dart around the garden. The sky is so blue. It is like a veil of chiffon, which seems to touch the Heavens. I can understand the Chinese love to paint the sky, and the white clouds. I never tire

of them. One seems to forget the Earth entirely, when looking at them.

I must run away now, as my Mother is calling me. You know that she is not happy, if I am out of her sight.

Yesterday I wore a blue dress; it was so becoming, and I was regretting all the time that my darling was not here to admire his little wife. I am only happy in your charming society. Your devoted Mattie.

P. S. You must not worry about my riding Halpin, for I have him under perfect control. The last time I rode him, however, instead of getting off at the horse block, I jumped off on an iron chair at the front steps, and my foot slipped, and I think my arm was sprained, which pained me for several days, but Halpin was not to blame for this. He stood quite still, so do not worry about him any more.

My cousins, the Archers, are visiting us. They are anxious to meet you and are amused when I speak of you always as "Mr. Nichol." They are going to New Orleans from here. Come soon to see the little woman who loves you so dearly. Mattie.

Huntley,
December 20th."

"Troy, Louisiana,

My darling Mattie:

It all seems a dream. I cannot realize even now that I am a father, that we have been married for a year, that the horrible nightmare, the fear, has passed, that you are really well and happy. I think so much of my beautiful little wife, and our baby, that I find it impossible to sleep at night sometimes. I feel that I should not be away under any circumstance, my darling, but you know that it is through no choice of my own, but the force of circumstances, and your desire to live at Huntley.

Good-by, little wife, until Thursday night.

Your devoted Husband.

P. S. Do I fancy it, that the eyes of this little girl of ours seem to fasten themselves upon me as they do the light? I wonder if I imagine it, or if it is possible for a mere baby to be so intelligent and personal. She seems to like me better than she does you. Strange, isn't it, Mattie?"

"Troy, Louisiana,
January 12th,

My darling Mattie:

I am quite sure now that it is not imagination that the baby loves me best. I know this will not hurt your generous heart, for if it is so, you have made it so by your constant thought of me. I have never seen such eyes of love, but such sad eyes, too. Our little Laura not only fascinates, but haunts me. I am sure it is not imagination, because Dick and all the servants have noticed it too, or perhaps you think they agree to please me? I don't know.

Dick has been waiting for some time to take this letter, so good-bye again.

Your devoted Husband."

"Troy, Louisiana,

My darling Mattie:

Few men can truly boast of two years of perfect happiness and soon I shall be able to arrange my business so that I can stay more at Huntley. I am so sorry to hear of your indisposition but glad that it is only a slight illness. You are so strong and well. I am sure that in a few days you will be yourself again.

I can never associate illness with you. It does not belong to you so that I know in a few days I will have good news from you.

My love to little Laura with the strange, dark eyes, and always my dearest love to you.

Your devoted Husband."

# CHAPTER XII.

## LAURA.

She's somewhere in the sunlight strong,
  Her tears are in the falling rain,
She calls me in the wind's soft song,
  And with the flowers she comes again.

Yon bird is but her messenger,
  The moon is but her silver car;
Yea! sun and moon are sent by her,
  And every wistful waiting star.

—Richard LeGallienne.

HEN Laura was old enough to observe intelligently she continued to gaze at her father for minutes at a time. When he left the room, she would turn her head and watch him. Sometimes she would break into a sudden cry and when he returned she would stop crying abruptly and smile through her tears at him. When she was old enough to be controlled a little, no one could control her at all except her father. She utterly ignored the wishes of others, but anything that he wished was accepted graciously by her.

Her beautiful Mother seemed to have no charm for her.

"Laura loves you exclusively," said the little Mother one day. "Perhaps it is because of my constant thought of you held so strongly in love before her birth. It is prenatal influence."

"Yes, undoubtedly," said her husband. "But the way she looks at me is almost unearthly. It frightens me at times. It is a bit uncanny, I think. The mature love in her look, the tenderness, the passion, and always as though she is afraid of losing me. Sometimes she looks frightened when I leave the room, and the look of keen joy when I return is undeniable. It is compelling. It is, of course, your love, dear Matty, transmitted into her soul. Poor little thing, already she knows the agony of love, the fear as well as the joy of it."

"Yes, 'Mr. Nichol,' she watches the door continuously, and when I take her in my arms she seems quite indifferent. Almost bored, I might say, and sometimes disdainful. Have you noticed how imperious she is already? She is very

determined and may be arrogant as she grows older."

"I have never seen such strange but marvellously beautiful eyes," continued his wife. "At times they are so sad and wise, and again they look as though they held a sun in them—something radiating warmth and color. Dr. Coleman says that she is unusually intelligent and considers her quite a beauty, you know."

"Yes, but a strange beauty."

"Everyone notices her, and the servants are quite superstitious about her. Of course, your valet Dick insists that she is haunted."

# CHAPTER XIII.

## A JANUARY NIGHT.

A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.
—Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

THE rain was pouring in torrents and melting the heavy snow. It was a January night. There was no other sound beside the rain, except the constant barking of a dog. It seemed more a wail than a bark, and awakened Algernon Nichol from a deep sleep. He turned up the oil lamp and tried to read, but he could not. He felt strange, nervous, excited, expectant. He got up and lit a cigar, stirred the fire because it was the only thing that could cheer him in the least. After a while he heard a sudden knock at the door.

"How strange," he thought, for it was then two o'clock in the morning.

There was silence for a moment, and then a louder knock. Getting up quickly, he hurried to the door.

"Who's there?" he said.

"It is a telegram," answered a hoarse voice.

He opened the door quickly. A negro man stood in the door.

"Lost my way, boss, or would have been here in time fo' you to catch the boat. Terrible night, sir. The boss at the telegraph office couldn't get anyone to take this to you except me."

The words "in time to catch the boat" startled Algernon Nichol, and he tore open the telegram hurriedly. He read these words "Come at once, your wife very ill, Signed, Dr. Coleman." He reeled for a moment, and caught the door to steady himself.

"Call Dick," he said to the negro servant. "Hurry, hurry." And then, still holding on to the door, he stood there motionless for several moments.

Dick came in in a startled way. "Buddy, honey, Marse Algy," he said, "what am de matter?"

"The boat has passed the landing. There is no other way until tomorrow," and then he stood for a moment and said

suddenly "Yes, there is. Saddle the horses—my horse Dexter and a fast one for yourself, and hurry, I tell you, hurry."

Throwing on his clothes, a rain coat and heavy boots, he grabbed a revolver, thrusting it into his pocket. Dick was back in a few minutes.

"The horses are ready, suh, but it's a turrible night, suh. As black as ink."

"Yes, I know," said his master. "Get a flask of whiskey. Bring the horses to the front door." This he said calmly, but Dick could see that he was in a terrible state of excitement.

"Where are we goin', Marse Algy?"

"We cannot catch the boat at the next landing—we are going to ride through the country to St. Joseph, then get a skiff and cross the Mississippi, get more horses at the landing, cross the river and ride to Huntley."

"You can't do it, Marse Algy. It will take us till tomorrow to get there—tomorrow evening. And the creek may be up in Mississippi, and then we'll not get

there anyhow and we'll miss the second boat."

"We are going anyhow," said his master in a commanding voice. "I can swim my horse across the creeks. You can stay behind. Get the horses, I tell you."

"Yessir," answered Dick. "You knows I'm goin' with you but I jus' wanted to remind you of the creeks."

"Yes, I thought of everything, Dick."

Putting on his spurs hurriedly, he followed Dick out into the black night. Mounting his horse Dexter, he pulled his felt hat down over his eyes, spurred his horse and was off in a gallop.

Dick followed him. The dog howled as they rode away.

Algernon Nichol was a splendid horseman and some magnificent power seemed to direct the horse as he rushed down the road, followed by the faithful servant.

"He'll kill himself," muttered Dick. "It's certain death, it's so muddy. The mud will stick on the horse's hoofs and trip him and break Buddy's neck."

"Oh, my Gawd," he said aloud. "I wonder if he's goin' mad. I never seed such a look in anybody's face before."

On, on they rode, blinded by the rain. For hours they rode. Once or twice the horses shied out of the road. Again they stumbled but went on just the same. The day began to break into gray, dismal. Finally they reached St. Joseph, engaged a skiff, left the horses at the landing and rowed across the Mississippi. The river was swollen and muddy, but they mastered the angry waves and reached the Mississippi side.

Breathlessly Algernon Nichol ordered horses at the Rodney Landing and in a few moments was off again.

Two hours passed and Dick said, "We'll make it, boss, unless the creek is up." His master did not answer him but spurred his horse on with grim determination. In a few minutes Dick stopped.

"Come on, Dick," shouted his master.

"I'm listening, suh. Hear a roarin' noise. It's up, suh, the creek is up. You'll never get across. We better go back and try and catch the second boat."

"I will swim across," muttered his master savagely, but when they drew near enough they found that Coles Creek was like a river, only more stirred, more tempestuous. It fairly roared and growled. There seemed to be strange, angry voices. It was muddy and ugly and horrible to look upon, and even the bravest rider could not swim across it. Algernon Nichol almost dashed into it, however, when Dick cried out, "For Gawd's sake, don't go in there. It means certain death."

The horse that Algernon Nichol rode was a strange horse to him and he longed for his Dexter that he had left on the Louisiana side of the Mississippi River, who would have been willing to go in, in spite of danger. He tried to force the strange horse into the creek, but the horse turned around abruptly.

The second time the horse seemed to feel some compelling force and was about to follow the commanding voice which told him to go in, but Dick grabbed the bridle and said, "Buddy, Buddy, in the name of Gawd and your baby—. Stop,

wait till it goes down. Wait a little while, anyhow."

At the mention of the baby's name, Algernon Nichol suddenly remembered that he had a child. He had quite forgotten the child's existence and winced a little as Dick unconsciously suggested that he no longer had a wife but a child to live for.

"I have a wife to live for," he said savagely to the servant. "Why do you mention my child? How dare you? I will kill you, Dick, if you speak again."

"Oh, yo' wouldn't hurt me, Buddy. Yo' just excited. I never seed you like this before. Come 'long now and get off the horse and take a drink out of the flask. You're shiverin' with cold and you might as well give up now 'cause I means it. If you tries to go in I'se going to pull you back jus' like you was a little boy way back in Louisiany land. You 'member how I used to keep you from gettin' hurt all the time."

Like a bewildered child Algernon Nichol got off his horse slowly. "I guess your are right, Dick. There is no use in

two people dying," and then he caught his breath, as though having spoken subconsciously, having unconsciously announced that there had been a death.

"We are both talking very strangely, Dick."

"Yessir," answered Dick. "It's 'cause we so excited."

"Yes," answered his master, "but sometimes when people are excited they get into some psychic condition which reveals the present and the future to them."

Walking up and down the sand he said, "Did you bring any matches, Dick? If so, go and gather some wood and make a fire."

"It's too wet, Buddy; the logs would never burn. Jus' take a drink and you'll feel a little better. That's why I brought it, you know."

The hours passed while the master and servant paced up and down the bank of Cole Creek until the daylight faded into darkness again. "It will never go down, Dick. I never saw it like that. So mean and angry and cruel."

"Yassuh," said Dick. "I never seen anything so horrible. But jus' a minute, suh. Look across the creek. Can you see those lanterns swinging to and fro?"

"Yes," said his master. "It is someone trying to get across this way, or someone who guessed we might come this way."

"Yas," said Dick. "It's good news, sure as you live," he said, trying to cheer his master.

The words "good news"—the iron in them—cut the soul of Algernon Nichol, but he said nothing except, "If I could only get across—if I could only get across.

"Only two miles from the other side to Huntley, and this monster keeping me here. I always hated Coles Creek. It is the meanest creek in the world," he said as his voice broke into a cry.

"Don't take on like that, sir," said Dick. "I'm sure it's gwine down in a little while. I'll go down to the edge o' the water and see if it has gone back a little."

Dick disappeared in the darkness. In a moment he shouted, "It's goin' down a little. Soon you can swim across. It's

gettin' quiet now, too. It's gone back about four feet in the last hour."

Algernon Nichol did not answer, but paced up and down in an agony of mind, while the dull lanterns swung to and fro across the creek in the darkness.

In a half hour, Algernon Nichol said, "Dick, I'm going to try it. I cannot stand this any longer. I am going to swim across no matter what happens!"

Going up to the strange horse, he patted him on the neck and said, "You'll go across old man for me, won't you?" The horse lifted his head and seemed to understand the kind words and almost put his head against the handsome face as though to say, "I'll do my best."

In a moment Algernon Nichol dashed into the creek. Dick tried to follow him, but his horse turned back and refused to go in.

Algernon Nichol said to his horse, "Go on, go on, old fellow. Take me across!"

The horse swam magnificently and in a few minutes reached the other side of the creek.

Algernon Nichol jumped off his horse and ran up to the lanterns. There was not a sound, only the darkness and the two lanterns which suddenly stopped swinging and were still for a moment. As he drew nearer, he caught the outline of two figures. He rushed forward and said, "Who is it?" Then as he drew closer he said, "Oh, it's Cousin Wade! It is you. I am so glad. Tell me! Tell me!" But there was no answer.

He caught hold of one of the lanterns abruptly, the one which was in his cousin's hand. Holding it up to his face, it threw a ghastly light upon Wade Harrison, who stood motionless and said nothing.

"Speak to me, Cousin Wade. Am I dreaming? How strange everything is. How is Mattie?"

Still there was no answer. Wade Harrison looked helplessly at his companion, Payne Green, as though to say, "You tell him, I cannot."

Catching the look in the faces of these two gentlemen he knew that it was either a hopeless illness or death.

"Which is it?" he said pleadingly, looking at his Cousin Wade who still did not answer. Grabbing him by both shoulders he said, "Speak, man, speak!"

But Wade Harrison did not answer. He stood speechless with grief, and then Payne Green said slowly, tenderly, "Algernon, my boy, Mattie has gone. She——."

Algernon Nichol stood calmly for a moment, bewildered, stunned. Uttering a low, hoarse moan, he threw himself down upon the ground, his face in the mud, unconscious of the surroundings. The two grim figures stood above him motionless. Finally Wade Harrison said, "Come along, my boy, with us." But there was no answer.

Finally Payne Green said, "The baby is there, you know." Still no answer. And then Wade Harrison said "Laura is there. You must come with us, at once."

Realizing that his cousin was in an unconscious state, he said to Payne Green, "You help me get him up. We'll have to put him in the carriage. Call the driver."

Payne Green putting down the lantern called the driver to his side.

The three of them lifted Algernon Nichol into the carriage. He sat there with his head on Wade Harrison's shoulder like a helpless child.

"Drive carefully," he said to the negro driver. "Be careful of the hills. They are slippery."

The carriage drove away, the wheels making a gruesome sound in the darkness.

Once in a while a screech owl uttered its unearthly cry, and a dog howled in the distance. Not a word was said. Only the driver was heard cracking his whip occasionally and saying "Get up" to the horses. His voice sounded foreign, alien, quite unnatural, for he too dreaded the drive to Huntley, which meant that his master was to look upon death for the second time.

In an hour they arrived at Huntley. It was still dark. Weird shadows deepened in the night. There was no wind—no sound. The stillness was unearthly.

As they drew up in front of the door, Wade Harrison and Payne Green got

out solemnly and practically lifted Algernon Nichol out of the carriage. Mary Harrison greeted him and the mother of his wife greeted him. But he did not seem to see anyone. He walked past them with his eyes staring. He staggered a little, but insisted upon walking up the stairway alone—the one which led to his wife's bedroom.

Wade Harrison followed him. He walked calmly to the door and opened it, and then suddenly turned and said—"I cannot go in there, Cousin Wade."

Mattie Nichol lay upon her bed with tall candles at her head and at her feet, but instead of the usual crucifix, she held a fan, in her hand. She seemed to smile and looked like an angel lost in a beautiful dream.

Algernon Nichol turned and looked at her. He then walked calmly up to her. He did not speak or cry out, but stood motionless for minutes. Then, suddenly, without a tear, he left the room.

He went to the nursery where Laura was asleep. The nurse greeted him tenderly. He did not seem to see her.

Taking Laura in his arms he walked out of the room, into the large hall. He walked up and down until morning, Laura asleep with her cheek against his. Once she awakened and put her arms more tightly around his neck. On and on he walked. Finally Wade Harrison went up to him and spoke, but he was not conscious of his presence.

He then returned to his wife and said, "I fear for his mind. I have never seen such grief. I did not know that anyone could suffer so terribly, so deeply. You try and see what you can do. He does not notice me at all."

Leaving her husband and going to Algernon Nichol, she said, "It is morning, Algernon. You must rest now. You must do so for my sake and for Laura."

"Rest," he said, "Cousin Mary, rest? How strangely you speak. Do you not know that there can be no rest for me except in the grave? What things you say, all of you to me. It is because you do not understand—you, who are not acquainted with death."

"But I am acquainted with love, dear

boy, and my heart breaks for you. Come, dear, just follow me."

"Yes, Cousin Mary," he said and then added "Whatever you say, for *nothing matters now.*"

Mary Harrison led him into his bedroom. "Call Dr. Coleman," she said to her husband.

The doctor entered slowly, solemnly. "Take off your coat, Mr. Nichol," he said in a commanding way. "Take off your coat," he said again, while Algernon Nichol looked at him in a dazed, bewildered way. And then, like a weary child, he began taking off his coat, slowly.

"Mrs. Harrison," said the doctor, "roll up his sleeve."

In a second, Dr. Coleman had stuck a hypodermic needle into his patient's arm, who did not notice it at all. He was too stunned to feel.

"Now, you will sleep, Mr. Nichol," said the Doctor kindly. "Lie down now and in a few minutes you will rest."

"There is that word again," he said. "How strangely you all speak." And then he said to his cousin Mary, "You

never told me what the trouble was. It was all so sudden. What was it?"

"Her heart," answered his Cousin Mary. "It has not been so strong since Laura's birth."

"I never knew anything about it. Why did you not tell me?"

"Because it was her wish, and the doctor said she might have lived for years. There was a chance."

"Yes," he answered, "that was like her. But what were her last words—her message?"

"There was no message, but her last words to me, were, 'Make-me-look-pretty-for-"Mr. Nichol."' "

# CHAPTER XIV.

## JASMINE.

"I like the wild flowers best.
They ask nothing and give everything."
—Thomas Dixon.

WHEN Laura was a little girl she lived at Everton with the Harrisons, her Grandmother Watson having died. Her father lived in Louisiana, and came to Everton plantation but once a month to see Laura. For days before his coming she was in a state of spiritual ecstasy. Her whole personality vibrated life. The spirit of Browning's words "All's right with the world" was her spirit toward life. She was literally charged with power, virility, and radiant joy.

When her father was to visit the plantation, she would put on a white dress with a red sash and little red slippers. She would seat herself in a big chair on the veranda where she could listen for the carriage wheels in the distance. If there

was the slightest noise she would fly into a rage, so determined was she to preserve the silence.

"But you can see, Laura, dear," said Mary Harrison, "the drive is so long and straight."

"Yes," interrupted Laura, "but I must hear, too. Please, Cousin Mary, go in. Be quiet and tell the servants to be quiet. I will call them in time. Please, please, go away, Cousin Mary." She said this so earnestly and pleadingly that Mary Harrison would go into the house without a word, waiting for Laura to give the signal.

Laura would sit breathless with emotion, her hands clasped together, her little feet clasped too. At the appointed hour, if she did not hear the wheels in the distance, she would grow moody, nervous, sad, filled with suspense.

"I hope the hills are not too slippery, or perhaps the creek is up." This she would think to herself, the thoughts dashing through her brain, and then calling out suddenly, "What time is it, Cousin Mary?"

"Just four o'clock, dear," answered her cousin.

"Well he should have been here before," said Laura—"at least five minutes ago. What has happened, do you think, Cousin Mary?—why do you think he is late?"

"Nothing, dear," answered her cousin. "He probably stopped to light a cigar, or something, or perhaps to have the driver gather some wild flowers for you—the jasmine that you love so well. It is only five minutes after four anyhow. And don't get yourself into such a nervous mood, Laura. It is not good for your health."

Laura did not hear a word that was said, but repeated, "What do you think has happened, Cousin Mary? It is horrible—I cannot stand it any longer. Dick is probably talking to him about cotton. I wish Dick would not talk so much."

"No, I think your father is getting the yellow jasmine for you, Laura. And then Dick is so fond of him. He loves to talk to him, too."

"Well," said Laura quickly, "Papa

does not care a damn about anybody's love except mine."

"Laura, Laura," said her cousin, "the idea of your using such a word. What would your father think? I am surprised, ashamed, Laura."

"Well, it is the only word that expresses my meaning, Cousin Mary. Other words are so insipid. I like the word, you know, and so does Cousin Wade."

"Well, you must not use it anyhow."

"And I suppose that Papa would be shocked. You see I am so deep, Cousin Mary. People do not understand me."

"You mean intense, Laura. You must try to control yourself more, and your temper, too."

"It is not temper, Cousin Mary. Really it is not. Something so deep, I tell you. I have to say things, once in a while. Be quiet, Cousin Mary, listen—do you hear the wheels?"

"I hear something, Laura, but I do not know what kind of wheels they are. They may be wagon wheels."

"They are carriage wheels," answered Laura. "He is coming, he is coming."

"But cannot you tell the difference, Cousin Mary, even in the distance? I can, but, of course, I can hear like the devil. It is because I am a Martian."

"A what?" said her cousin. "And did you know what you said just then?"

"Why no, Cousin Mary, what did I say?"

"You used a very ugly word—you said 'the devil.' "

"Oh, did I? Well, I meant 'the devil,' I suppose, but I should have said 'dickens.' I really do not know what I am saying now, Cousin Mary. And please do not think me impolite, but do go in the house again and do not come out any more."

Mary Harrison stood back of Laura's chair.

"Can you not smell the cigar?" said Laura eagerly. "Don't you get the perfume of it?"

"Not yet," answered Mary Harrison, "it is too far away."

"Well, I can smell it. But, of course, I smell like the devil—I mean dickens. And you know that is because I am a Martian."

"I have not the remotest idea what you mean by being 'a Martian.' You must not read Du Maurier so much."

"Well, you know the Martians have a keener sense of things. They get currents, waves."

"Well, I do not know about that, but I notice you never say ugly words when your father is here."

"Oh, no,—that is because I am happy. The currents are all right when he is here."

"I do not know what you mean by currents. I know that you read too much psychological literature and you're probably very badly mixed up as a result."

"Yes, but look, Cousin Mary. Can you not see the carriage in the distance?"

"No, dear, I only see a cloud of dust. I see a vehicle, but I cannot distinguish it."

"Well, then, if you cannot, Cousin

Mary, please go in the house. I really mean it. You upset me terribly."

Slowly her cousin walked away into the hall and Laura became silent.

"What time is it?" she shouted again.

"Ten minutes past four, Laura."

"Oh, I thought it was at least five o'clock."

She continued sitting in the large chair, rigid and tense, listening and straining her eyes to see. Suddenly she dashed down the steps into the yard, and was flying toward the front gate, crying aloud, "He is coming, he is coming." And then her small figure disappeared in a cloud of dust that her feet made in the hurrying.

The carriage stopped abruptly. Laura fairly flew into her father's arms, kissing his cheeks, his hair, his eyes.

"Oh, Papa, Papa, I am so glad to see you," and then, scanning his face, she said, "You look well." This was the first thing she said always, as if to satisfy some terrible fear that had been lurking in her mind. "But I thought you would

never come, Prince. What happened to you?"

"Why, nothing, dear," answered her father calmly. "It is only a quarter past four, and I stopped to have Dick get the yellow jasmine for you. I knew that you must have gathered all that grew in the garden by this time."

"And how are you, Laura?" he said, and then dreamily, while scanning her face, "You look well," as though in response to some fear, and then, "Let me see you again. Yes, you do look quite well. You are well, I suppose."

"Oh, yes, Papa, quite well."

"And your Cousin Mary and Cousin Wade—how are they?"

"Oh, I do not know," answered Laura carelessly, as though to say, "Why speak of them—who cares about anything or anybody now?"

"How do you like my dress and the red sash?" she said in a coquettish way.

"Beautiful dear, and so becoming. Soon you will be old enough to wear red roses in your hair."

"Yes, Papa, but you know I do not

care very much for red. I only wear it because you like it."

And then she said again, "I am so glad, glad, glad, to see you!"

"Here we are," her father said as the carriage stopped slowly at the front door.

And then the invariable question which she always asked, "How long will you stay, Papa, this time?"

"Oh, several days, dear. But don't think of that now. And while I speak to your cousins, take a peep in my bags, and see what I brought this time."

"How do you do, Cousin Mary?" he said solemnly. "And how are you, Cousin Wade?" This he said in rather an absent-minded way, but they understood it was because his joy was so keen at seeing Laura again.

"Laura is looking well, Cousin Mary. I thank you for your care."

"And how is the hunting, Cousin Wade?" he added.

"Very good, Prince, very good. Payne Green is coming over tomorrow to hunt with you. We thought you would like

to be alone with us this evening—with Laura," he added.

"Yes, thank you, Cousin Wade. This is right."

Going to his room, he began to groom himself up a bit after the dusty ride. Laura burst into the room and said, "Oh, Papa, it is lovely—so golden and bright. Where did you find it—it is so beautiful a color."

"I got it in New Orleans for you, Laura. But I suppose you cannot wear it yet. Ask your Cousin Mary."

Taking the gift in her arms, she ran out to her cousin. "You are not old enough yet. It is a Spanish shawl for a young lady—not for a little girl like you," said her cousin.

"Well, I can look at it now," said Laura. "Papa always brings such lovely things. But always Spanish things."

Then she ran back to her father and said, "I will keep it until I am older, and I will love looking at it."

And then, quite breathlessly, "I have practiced a lot since you were here. I can accompany you. I have learned the

waltzes that you like. But, oh, Papa, I have found such a wonderful thing. Something in a minor key. It is Oriental —Egyptian, I think. You come into the parlor and I will play it for you right now."

Taking him by the hand, she led him to the parlor. "Now, listen, Prince, and listen carefully. It is perfectly gorgeous, magnificent. It makes the waltzes seem insignificant."

Her father smiled as these intense and rather large words tumbled out of her young throat.

"Now, picture yourself in Egypt again."

"But, I have never been there, dear."

"Well, then, just try to be there—try to get back." Then she stopped abruptly and said, "Try to remember, Prince."

"Oh, what am I saying?" she added. "Well, anyhow, I thought of our being in Egypt so long that I feel we have been there. Mr. Payne Green says we were in some other life and I am sure he is right. He is always right."

And then she started a slow, solemn,

theme in a minor key. She played it correctly for a few moments, and then wandered off into a composition of her own. She ended it solemnly, and after a moment of silence she said, "What do you think of it, Prince?"

"It is beautiful, Laura. But the last of it—was that added on?"

"Yes, I forgot the last of it, and just made up something to fit."

"Play it again," said her father.

She played again, but this time faltered. "I cannot remember now, Prince. It is gone. I can never remember my own composition, you know."

"Yes, dear, I understand, but it is too bad for it was a lovely thing. Too lovely to be forgotten."

"Yes, Prince," said Laura, and then looked at him strangely. "Nothing lovely should be forgotten."

And then, changing the subject abruptly, she said, "I have a confession to make to you. I want to tell you before Cousin Mary tells you. I believe I was once a Martian. Then I reincarnated upon this earth and went to Egypt and

then I came here. I cannot quite remember, but Mr. Green's word is right—it is reincarnation. I stole a book out of the library the other day about the East by Max Müller. Cousin Mary says it is not orthodox and took it away from me. Says it does not go with the Episcopal Church, and, therefore, is wrong. I hate the Episcopal Church, papa, it is so cold and narrow. And I want, also, to tell you the other part of my confession. I read two books of Bob Ingersoll, since you were here. And, oh, yes, the most important thing to tell you is that I sometimes say 'damn' and more than that, I like to say it. I found the books of Ingersoll in your room, so I know they are all right. I liked them immensely. Don't you like Bob Ingersoll, Papa? You understand, I know. Cousin Mary thinks he is terrible. But Cousin Wade,—well, I am not so sure about him. Perhaps he likes him too, because he says 'damn' also. Just like the rest of us. Is it not a shame, Papa, that ladies cannot curse? It is really such a help, is it not?"

Her father tried to restrain his laugh-

ter, but she held his eye and said, "I know when you smile it is all right, and that you will forgive me. This is a double confession, because I told Mr. Payne Green, and he understands perfectly."

"Payne Green is a genius," said her father laughingly, "and so are you, Laura, and a strange genius, too."

"Oh, am I, Papa? I did not know that. I know that I am very good looking and that I have wonderful eyes, but I did not know that I was a genius. What is a genius, Papa?"

"Well, dear, someone who has a very remarkable talent of some kind."

"Well, I haven't any remarkable talent. I have a fearful time with the piano. The only talent I have is for reading grown-up books."

"Poor little love child," he thought, "and so alone."

"Some day I will tell you what your genius is, Laura. It is best for you not to know now." And then, smiling a slow, wistful smile, he said, "When you grow up, Laura, you will find no one like yourself. Even now, other little girls do not

understand you. They think you are haughty and unkind. They do not understand that you are merely superior. But you must not let this hurt you. You must take it philosophically."

"Oh, I don't care a bit what the little girls think about me, Papa. They bore me unmercifully. And little boys, too, as for that. And really, I don't think I care very much about anybody, except you. You know how it is. By the way, I gathered some wild flowers for you. You brought me the yellow jasmine, but I got you something lovely too. Come along and I will show you. They are floating around in a big tub in the garden, and no one dares to touch them."

Going toward the flowers, her father was a bit startled for a moment when he saw some huge magnolia blossoms floating in the water.

"Now, don't you think that was rather nice of me?' 'she said in a coquettish way.

"It was very sweet of you, Laura. Whatever you do is sweet."

And, changing the subject abruptly, he said, "By the way, I got you the perfume

you liked in New Orleans. The jasmine of Coty. It suits you best, I think. Run into the house and get it out of my bag. I will see you later, dear. I will just stay here a little while and look at the magnolia blossoms."

"All right, Prince," she answered, "and tomorrow I am going on the hunt with you and that dear Mr. Payne Green. You know he understands me perfectly."

# CHAPTER XV.

## ROSES.

Now one and all, you Roses,
  Wake up, you lie too long!
This very morning closes
  The Nightingale his song:

Each from its olive chamber
  His babies every one
This very morning clamber
  Into the shining sun.

You Slug-a-beds and Simples,
  Why will you so delay!
Dears, doff your olive wimples,
  And listen while you may.

—Ralph Hodgson.

LAURA dashed into the room playfully, "Some roses, 'Mr. Nichol,'" she said mischievously. Her arms were full of yellow roses. "They are for you," she said.

"Thank you dear, but why yellow roses? I like the red ones best."

"Yes, but I like the yellow ones. They are so bright, so warm."

"So are red ones," said her father.

"But they are not the color of the sun," said his daughter quickly.

"Why did you name me Laura, Papa?" she said. "So solemn a name; it doesn't suit me." "Laura," she said thoughtfully—"No, that really is not my name."

"Just a fancy, dear," said her father. "It is a lovely name."

She dashed out of the room, holding her head high. As she did, her father heard her say in a commanding way, "Saddle my horse, Dick." The tone of her voice was not disagreeable, but intensely commanding.

Laura's mind was mature—her love of books, especially Oriental books, amounted to a passion. Her chief characteristics were pride and justice. She was proud to a degree, haughty and intolerant of middle class people, whom she had never met until she went to boarding school, where there were a few *nouveau riche* girls, whom she instinctively disliked. She was quick to grasp any social distinction and was almost cruel in her exclusive and cold attitude

toward these girls. To servants, however, she was always kind and gentle, and they adored her.

At school she wrote a number of essays on unusual subjects. She was particularly interested in religions, especially those of the Orient. She disliked orthodoxy, and was called by her school-mates "Bob Ingersoll."

She talked as freely of Buddha, Confucius, Pythagoras, Swedenborg, the Greek Philosophers—Socrates, in particular—and our American Philosopher, Emerson, as though they were her friends. She understood the personality of each one, as well as the teachings.

She often failed in language and mathematics and, therefore, did not graduate with honour. However, she was recognized as a brilliant mind and radiant personality.

When she returned to the old plantation she was quite happy because she was with her father and his friends.

Her cousins, Mary and Wade Harrison, went to Maryland for a long visit, but Laura did not seem to care.

"You do not miss your cousins, Laura, do you?" said her friend, Payne Green, "and they loved you so."

"No, I do not grieve for them. Of course, I miss them—quite naturally. I admire them both very much, but, frankly, Mr. Green, I do not care for anyone, in the deep sense, except my father. I worship him, you know. Other people do not exist really for me. They are like ghosts, unreal, intangible, and I seem to see them through a mist. Perhaps they are more like automatons to me. They do not inspire me with any form of love. But my father, Prince Nichol, even you, Mr. Green, cannot know how I feel about him. Of course, you will be shocked when I tell you that my father is my God. He represents everything to me. I feel no love for the Infinite. I, of course, feel respect, but love—not at all. I only know love for one individual—one thing. If he dies I shall die. My body may live on but my soul will go away. Of course, you know, Mr. Green, that the body can exist without the soul. The Orientals have known that for thousands

of years. We are just beginning to learn it here in this Occidental world of ours. Oh, Mr. Green, if Papa would only take me to Egypt or India or somewhere in the East—I long so to go, but he wants to stay here and I must stay with him."

"Quite naturally, my child. The old home has sweet memories for him of your beautiful mother."

"And Rosa Gordon," added Laura quickly.

When the sun was shining, Laura was brilliant, radiant, vibrating with life and intensity, but in the evening she was negative. It was as though her real personality had gone with the sun. She was often dreary and quiet to a degree.

On cloudy days she was the same—quite depressed. This, because her natural element was lacking.

She had a passion for all shades of yellow, from the lightest yellow to the red and gold which is seen in the sun just as it is setting. Often she would wear large straw hats of yellow, which drooped with the roses which weighed it down.

"I am always happy in the sun," she said to her father. "I belong to it. The golden waves of ether come down and encircle me. They give me life and they tell me things in some strange language —that all of us should be happy and that the subconscious life is always happy and wise. It is only in the so-called conscious life, which is distorted by human beings, that there is no joy."

"I am even happy when I am sad," she continued, "for the sadness is so keen that it broadens my vision. I see beyond and know that beyond all is well, quite well, even if we do not quite understand here in the strife of things."

"You are a thinker, Laura," said her father. "You talk like a philosopher."

Suddenly she turned to him eagerly and said, "Perhaps. But tell me something of Rosa Gordon."

"I have described her to you, Laura. I have told you all that I can tell you."

"Yes, but tell me of her habits, her tastes, the little things about her. Please, Papa."

"Ask Mr. Green," said her father,

sternly. "He knew her well, too, and I never think of her now. Don't you understand that all my love went to your mother?"

"All of it, Papa?" Laura asked eagerly.

"Well, dear, all that kind of love. Now that your mother has gone, of course all my love is for you."

"Poor Rosa Gordon," said Laura, without having appeared to hear what her father had said to her.

"You don't believe in spirits, Papa, I know, but I do. I believe that they are very near to us always and that sometimes they suffer terribly, especially when they are forgotten. My mother's tomb is so beautiful—the flowers are always so fresh—and Rosa Gordon's neglected. Only a few yellow jasmine growing there, and that is because they are wild and grow anyhow. Sometimes I go out and put some roses that I pick in the garden on her grave. I . . ."

"Don't speak of her again, Laura. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Papa, I won't, but I think of her all the time."

# CHAPTER XVI.

## AMARYLLIS.

The breeze, the breath of God is still,
And the mist upon the hill
Shadowy, shadowy, yet unbroken,
Is a symbol and a token;
How it hangs upon the trees,
A mystery of mysteries!

—Edgar Allan Poe.

LAURA said to her father at breakfast, "All the people who like me have names for me. Now, Mr. Green has a name, and he will not tell me the meaning. He says it is the name of a flower which is symbolic—amaryllis."

Her father answered solemnly, "I do not know, dear, but I will find out for you."

Laura sat unconsciously typifying this particular flower for at that moment she had summoned all the pride in her nature to preserve the dignity of the hour, for her father was leaving.

When the carriage drove up to the

door, the servant came into the dining room, announced the carriage and stopped by the bedroom to get Algernon Nichol's bags. Mary Harrison followed him to the veranda. Laura came with him and stood by him twisting her hands and trying to smile. The smile was a desperate smile, a grim, determined one. Her eyes were unnaturally bright with excitement, but she continued to smile and asked irrelevant questions, just anything, to keep up the conversation, for she feared the silence, for it brought tears and she detested tears.

Her father said "Good-bye" to his cousins and chatted a while, putting off his good-bye to her until the last moment. Reluctantly, slowly, he walked toward Laura, who had gone toward the end of the veranda, picking the yellow jasmine that grew there. She picked the flowers aimlessly and still continued to smile. Her father walked toward her. She said nothing but when he kissed her cheek she could not restrain the tears, and then he kissed her brown curls and then always said the same words, "Good-bye,

Baby." Then, after a long pause, "Good-bye." He walked away without a tear, but with the saddest smile in the world. He said the words so intensely, so deeply, with an infinite love and tenderness. The expression in the word "Baby" was like one of the deep yet tender tones he drew from his violin. He walked solemnly away and got into the carriage which drew away swiftly. He never looked back or waved his hand to her. It seemed that he did not dare to look back. Laura stood lost in a revery until he was quite out of sight with the tears falling slowly upon her gown.

Then, without a word, she walked away and always into the garden, where she sat motionless for hours. No one dared to go to her, or tried to comfort her, as she did not answer anyone. If she did, it was in an imperious, commanding way. She would sit there for hours. In the early afternoon she would come slowly into the house and go up to her room. Sometimes she would read, but would never talk to anyone, and she would think, "Was there ever such a

voice? Such a smile? Such a royal gentleman?"

Wade Harrison said to his wife, "This grief should not be encouraged. We must stop it, too."

"But what can I do, Wade? She is so silent and determined. I can do nothing. Her grief at his departure every time is as though it were death—as though she had lost him forever. I pity her deeply. But I cannot speak of it to her. Don't you notice that she never goes to anyone for comfort, and that she resents any intrusion whatever? Her feeling seems to be past conventional minds."

"Yes," answered her husband. "I have never known anything like her love. It is very tragic, I think."

When Algernon Nichol was away, Laura was indifferent to everything and everyone. If she studied at all, it was merely to please her father. She had no real interest in her studies—such studies as languages, mathematics, etc. She read Max Müller, Edwin Arnold and Pierre Loti and anything that she could get about the Orient.

"You must have some technical education," said her Cousin Wade. "You must read less and study more."

"Yes, Cousin Wade," she answered. "But I don't like French, and such things. Why can't I study Sanskrit? Mr. Green taught me a little, and I love it. But French—and English grammar—what a stupid thing. I really do not know yet the difference between a past participle and an adverb, and I think it is a reflection upon one's family to study grammar. A well-born person just knows good English instinctively and through association. How could I speak bad English when I talk to you?" she added graciously. "It's too bad that people have no originality—that all people do the same things and that people who like something original are considered peculiar. Mr. Green says that in the Orient girls do not go to college. I think it is terrible that I should be made to get ready for college. I am sure it is not papa's idea. It must be Cousin Mary's. All these rules and this hard work. I do not like any hard work. Isn't that perfectly natural, Cousin

Wade? A girl is just supposed to be charming—you know how it is. Dress well and read a few books. That is enough. The dress really has more to do with it, I think, than anything else. Of course, if papa wishes it, I will do it, but not for anyone else; not even for Mr. Payne Green!"

She walked away with a slight shrug of her shoulders and a disdainful look. After a while, she came back with an English grammar under her arm.

"What is the matter, Laura? You look so unhappy."

"I am not unhappy, Cousin Wade. Much worse than that. I am bored—bored to death."

Slowly she walked away again into the garden.

"Strange girl," said Wade Harrison to his wife, "and quite inperious at times. You should have heard her last Sunday talking to Bishop Tomson about religion. As a matter of fact, he could not refute her statements, and it was perfectly terrific when she began quoting Buddha and Confucius, proving that the Christ

had not said anything new at all, and then adding, 'Of course, this isn't original, Bishop. It is historical.' Of course there was nothing to be said, and she finished her conversation by asking him if he admired Bob Ingersoll, and what a great soul he was. I held my breath and did not know whether she did it out of mischief or whether she was lost in her enthusiasm for Ingersoll. However, the Bishop was highly entertained and amused at her precocious mind. Afterwards he said to me, 'That girl is a great thinker, and so original.' But tomorrow I am going to take all of the Ingersoll and the Oriental books and hide them away from her."

"She will find them, I am sure," said his wife, "I have tried that often."

"Well, we will burn them up," said her husband.

"It is of no use. When she goes next month to live in Louisiana with her father, she will find a perfectly pagan library. There isn't an orthodox book in the collection. Of course, she comes by this naturally, so it's one of the things that

cannot be helped. I can just pray for her. That is all that I can do. I only have one hold on her mentality, and that is that she really likes one of the Disciples very much. She admires St. Paul—'merely because he was intellectual,' she says. She speaks quite indifferently and sometimes disrespectfully of the others. She is really a problem and this is my only hope."

# CHAPTER XVII.

## LOUISIANA.

An ear that waits to catch
A hand upon the latch;
A step that hastens its sweet rest to win;
A world of care without,
A world of strife shut out,
A world of love shut in.

—Dora Greenwell.

LAURA, who was to have gone to Louisiana at the age of fourteen, was disappointed. She remained two years longer at Everton and then the time approached when she was to leave for her father's plantation in Louisiana.

The fact that she was leaving her old home did not seem to register in her consciousness at all. She insisted upon having her things packed days before she was to leave, and kept saying to her Cousin Mary, "It is wonderful that I am going—it is a dream come true." She went about the house singing, laughing and sometimes doing a "little light fan-

tastic toe" as she called it. She would stand on one foot and swing around on it for a long time, and then suddenly put both her feet down in a funny little stamp and run away into the garden. She was a thing of radiant joy.

"Just think, Cousin Mary," she said, "I am going to be with Papa and Dick and the old Mammy who nursed my Papa. I am sure I shall adore her because she knew him when he was a little boy. And Dick understands how I feel about trees. I mean these big trees at Everton."

When the day came for her to go away, she almost laughed when she said good-bye to her cousins. Waving them a gay farewell, she drove away down the long, straight drive.

She was going to Natchez, where she was to catch the boat up the Mississippi. She took the boat at Natchez, and was delighted with its quaint style—it was a unique boat, such as is only seen on the Mississippi. It had a huge red wheel at the back which seemed to not only splash, but splash the muddy waves and, in spite

of the muddy water and the uninteresting scenery that was passed in going up the Mississippi, Laura was delighted. There was something more than tropical, almost Oriental in it, and she was delighted with the captain on the boat. She told him that she was going to Troy plantation to live with her father.

"You know him," she said, "Mr. Nichol—Prince Nichol, rather."

"Yes, everyone knows him. He ships more cotton on these boats than any man in the state. And he is such a fine gentleman, too. We are always happy to have him on board."

Without warning, Laura grabbed the captain and kissed him on both cheeks. "You are a perfectly wonderful man, and I knew it the minute I saw you. My father is going to meet me, you see, and we will drive to the plantation tonight. So wonderful to be happy, captain, and not to be afraid of things and people. You do not know how glad I am to go away from that old Mississippi place. I just hated it!"

The captain altogether misunderstood

her meaning and thought that she had been cruelly treated and said, "Where did you live? I thought the Mississippi plantations were very beautiful and the people so nice."

"Yes, of course, I don't mean that. I don't suppose you would understand that I did not like the trees there and that all the family belong to the Episcopal Church, and were frightful bores. Whenever I wanted to be understood, I had to drive eight miles to Gayosa to visit Mr. Payne Green, who understands me perfectly. He has brains, you know."

"Oh, yes," said the captain, "I know of Mr. Payne Green."

"But then I guess you know my cousins, the Wade Hampton Harrisons, too."

"Yes, everyone knows them."

This was a habit of the captain's of saying this to people who got on board, but in this case he was telling the truth.

The boat landed at St. Joseph, a small but aristocratic little town in Louisiana. Numerous people got on board, who noticed Laura. She was quite unconscious of them all. She was so absolutely inter-

ested in things that she had no vanity at all. She did not know that she was being admired and she did not care either. At the next landing she was to get off. She stood on deck and waited for the bridge to be put down. It was really more of a plank than a bridge which reached from the boat to the levee. The negro men who were to carry off the freight waited while the passengers came on and off. In a few moments she got the perfume of a cigar and almost knocked a few people down in getting off the boat.

"Better be careful," said the captain. "The plank is narrow. You must come off with me, Miss Laura. You are under my care, you know."

"Yes, that is true, I must wait, but I know that my father is in that crowd. I smell the cigar."

"Well, I am sure he will be on board in just a moment," said the captain in a commanding tone, because he saw that Laura was apt to rush off and probably get stuck in the mud as she landed on the levee.

In a few moments her father came on

board speaking graciously to a number of friends, introducing her and then taking her off. They got into the carriage and drove away in the darkness. She could see, however, the palmettos which grew by the road, and once in a while the lanterns from the carriage threw a bright light on the black earth.

"The earth is so black and rich here," she said. "It is tropical, is it not? I love Louisiana, Papa," she said. "No hills and tall trees. It has such a charming atmosphere, and there is something very kind about it. You know, Papa, I never told you that I was deathly afraid of those tall trees at Everton. There was something too magnificent about them, and they had definite personalities, too. Some of them were unkind, but here the trees are so nice and sweet. I see that all the trees are round and fat-looking. Of course, that means that they are good-natured, and Dick told me that many of them had nuts on them—that is, those that are tall at all. And the little trees have blossoms and red berries. You know, there was an awful loneliness about

Everton. It was dignified and beautiful, but a little weird, I think. It frightened me. Oh, it is such a relief to be here, I am so, so glad. And your old nurse,—how is she? She will tell me all the things you did when you were a little boy."

"I thought Dick told you that," said her father laughingly, "There really isn't much to tell—I was just like other little boys. Do you see the lights now? They are the lights from the plantation. Soon we will be there."

On, on they drove. In a few moments the gate flew open softly, a negro servant said, "Good evenin'," and in another moment they were in the front of the door. An old negro woman came limping down the steps holding a lamp in her hands.

Algernon Nichol said to the old negro woman, "Mandy, this is my daughter, Miss Laura."

"How-you-do, Baby," she said, and held out her hand, while Laura put her arms around her and kissed her on both cheeks.

"Oh, Aunt Mandy, I am so glad to see you. I have heard so much about you."

"An' I'm sure glad to see you, Baby. You mustn't call me Aunt Mandy, honey. You mus' call me Mammy, 'cause I goin' to be your mammy, even if I is black. You don' mind an old black thing like me bein' your mammy? Come on in de house, honey—in the light, so I can see you. I jus' been dyin' to see you since you been born, but my rheumatism was so bad I'se scared to go to Missippi, an' Dick told me he didn't like Missippi anyhow. So I jus' stayed on here, honey."

Walking up the steps with her arms about the old negro woman, they entered the house. There was a large fireplace in the hall, over which were a number of vases filled with autumn leaves and red berries.

"Oh, how lovely," said Laura. "It is so cozy and cheerful."

And then the old negro nurse said to Algernon Nichol, "Lawd, Marse Algy, she's jus' as pretty as a wax doll."

"Come on, honey, and let me look at you again. You sure is grand. And I

cooked you some venison and sweet potatoes and made you some lemon pie and some chocolate cake, and some ice cream with nuts in it and Lawd, honey, you sure is pretty. I never dreamed you looked like a spirit. I don't mean a ghost, but I means somethin' bright and golden. Like de spirits I see in my sleep. An' we are all going to be so happy heah! And your papa he is goin' to be happy too!"

"Well, is he not happy always?" said Laura plaintively.

"Now, youse know, honey, he nebber was happy away from you. And he had to stay here on business and he wanted you with your cousins in Mississippi, and so it was awful hard for him. I often tol' him that I could take jus' as good care of you and you'd be happy here, but he wanted you to stay in Missippi, so there it is."

And then the old nurse went into the dining room, calling to Laura, "Come in here, honey. I'm goin' to have supper ready in about five minutes."

The dining room was quite lovely. There were softly shaded lamps, many

candles and another big fireplace, where the huge logs of wood burned brightly.

"I'se been dec'rating all day for you, honey," said the old nurse. "And after supper I'm goin' to show you your room, but you got to eat your supper first and just sit right down, while I bring on the venison because you know I'm the boss 'round here, and I got to take good care of a bright spirit like you what's so rosy and warm. You ought to see your room now, honey, but you got to eat your venison first. Your papa he bought lots of rosy things, such pretty velvet curtains and some kind of rug all mixed up with colors, I don't know what you call it, but it is imported, and lots of pretty pictures and a great big fireplace jus' like this one."

After dinner Laura was taken to her room, which was really quite beautiful and just as the nurse had described it. Her father stood in the door smiling happily.

"I am glad you like, it, dear—your new home. Perhaps you should have been here all along."

"Yes, I really should have been. This really seems like home."

"Tomorrow I have asked some friends over to meet you, and the next evening I am giving a dance for you. I engaged a band from Natchez, so you will have some good dance music, and a caterer and lots of champagne for the young men, and I know that all of them will fall in love with you. Soon you will be going to college—in about two weeks, I guess. But you will come home, Laura, for Christmas, of course, and, too, New Orleans is not very far away. I have arranged for you to go to Newcomb College."

"Yes, Papa," said Laura. "I'll do whatever you say but, of course, I do not care about going to college particularly."

And then, changing the subject, abruptly, "I know I am going to have a perfectly lovely time with your library, and I am old enough to read all of your books, I am sure."

In a few moments the nurse came in, and said, "You got to go to bed now,

honey. It is very late and you'll be up early in the mornin'. My room is right next to yours—the little room, you know. In case you want anythin', jus' call. I'll leave the door open a crack and then there's a big light from the fireplace, so I know you won't be scared. And your papa is jus' across the hall and I'se right here all the time. So, come along now, honey."

Laura went into the room again, and the old nurse began unpacking her bag. "Your trunks will be here tomorrow, but you're certainly not going to wear those flimsy things tonight. You'll catch a death of a cold."

So she went into the next room and brought out an old-fashioned night gown —a pink flannel gown—and insisted upon Laura's putting it on.

"I am sure it will sting me, Mammy. I never had on such a thing."

"Well, I'se nebber goin' to let you catch your death. An' only crazy people sleep in those evenin' dresses. That's all they is, so you jus' put on this nice, warm, sensible gown, while I bring you

some hot chocolate, and you'll be asleep in a jiffy."

"But I don't want any chocolate, Mammy. I've had so much supper."

"Doesn't matter what you want, honey. You got to have somethin' hot jus' before you go off to sleep. It will give you a nice dream."

"I am sure I will dream of venison and sweet potatoes. I never tasted anything so good."

Laura obeyed the old nurse, who slipped the strange gown over her head, and tucked her into bed, bustling off and talking to herself while she brought the chocolate. She came back and stood over the bed and said, "Now, drink this honey, cause you know I have to watch over you. You know I loves you and Gawd loves you too."

The next morning Laura was up before her breakfast, and walked around the pretty yard where there were so many chrysanthemums and put them on the table where her father was waiting for her. After breakfast they took a little drive together. He said, "I want

you to be happy, Laura and I want you to marry while you are young. In case of my death you would be so alone. And you are so discriminating. I am sure any man you would like would be a good man."

"Yes, Papa, but that is rather difficult, because I do not like young men, and I only like old men intellectually. I think I should make a terrible wife for any man."

"But I am sure in New Orleans you won't feel that way, after you become acquainted there. You will have a lovely time. The week-ends you can spend with friends, and it won't be all work, but a lot of play. This is true of all Southern girls. One must face life in a philosophical way, and I spent many sleepless nights in thinking of your future."

Her father glanced at her tenderly. "You must not be too haughty and indifferent, you know, Laura. It is very discouraging to young men and unflattering, too. You must not let them know how smart you are. At that rate, you

will have to talk very little, because whenever you talk, you say such clever things, you will bewilder the young cavaliers. Just learn to listen a lot and be quiet if you can, and do not dare talk about Bob Ingersoll. You will mystify the young men and shock their mothers."

"Well, men should not be so vain, and women so conventional. It is really so uninteresting, is it not, Papa? So few people have any real individuality. I will try and be nice for your sake and do whatever you say, but I do dread leaving you."

"Yes, I know, dear, but you will be back for Christmas and next summer I will take you wherever you say—perhaps to White Sulphur Springs, and the old Virginia resort where your mother visited."

"Well as long as you do not send me back to Everton, I do not care, Papa. I know it seems absurd to talk so much about the trees but you know the trees have strange personalities. You can tell all about a tree by its top. You can tell

whether it is friendly or unfriendly. Some of them are merely cold and indifferent, others actively unpleasant and harmful. Some are not only malicious but malignant. They are like huge, poisonous monsters."

"Don't you think you only imagine this, Laura?"

"No, I don't imagine anything. I only have a keener sense of things than most people. You just said yourself that I was smart, you know," she said laughingly, "and, you know, Papa, that Dick was afraid of those trees, too. I would hate to make a tree angry with me. It would hurt me in the end. Too, there are trees that group themselves together and fly at a terrific rate. I mean the spirit trees fly. You can only see the tops of them as they fly, and if they are good, they are a bright green, and if they are not good, they are very ugly, musty shades, queer browns, and things, shadowy and weird."

"I fear that Dick has talked to you too much about the trees. You must not listen to such superstition."

"But it is not superstition, Papa. Everything has its double—its counterpart. The Orientals teach that, and these doubles, these spirit trees, make a lot of mischief at night when they group themselves together and fly at you. But in Louisiana the trees are more contented because the soil is richer and more nourishing, while in Mississippi the soil is sandy, so the trees become restless and unpleasant."

"Don't you think you read too much Oriental literature, Laura? You have very strange ideas about things. For instance, these doubles and spirits you believe in—well, at any rate, don't talk to other people as you do to me. They might think that you were eccentric."

"Naturally," said Laura, "Limited minds are always superstitious of things they cannot understand. Things have to be proven. I often think of the witches that were burned, and dear, wonderful Joan of Arc and of Bruno and poor Copernicus."

# CHAPTER XVIII.

## A TREMENDOUS PROBLEM.

"There is a physical difference between the white and the black races which will forbid them living together on terms of political or social equality."
—Abraham Lincoln.

PAYNE GREEN came over to visit and to say good-bye to Laura, who was going to New Orleans to school. Too, he was going to have his annual deer hunt on Troy Plantation. The first evening he arrived he had a long talk with Algernon Nichol about the current news of the day, some of which brought before his mind the important and unique question of the negro—unique because the negro is a distinct type and one with tremendous extremes of temperament. Some of the negroes are loyal, faithful, loving, prophetic, possessing a tremendous amount of common sense, combined with the psychic faculty. Their loyalty was demonstrated by the faithful old

servants before and after the Civil War, and yet there is the vicious, dull, lazy, brutal and dishonest negro, who is not only condemned by white men, but negro men as well. In fact, the former type of negro is the first to condemn the latter.

In the morning newspaper there had been a gruesome account of a young girl who had been assaulted by a negro man. Payne Green said to his friend, "It is diabolical. I mean not only the crime, but the punishment. But what can be done—here where there are so many negroes and comparatively few whites? It is a tremendous question, and one which would take a supernatural mind to decide. We have done our best to cope with this problem and have realized that it is only through this diabolical punishment that the community is made safe for women."

People who speak so bitterly of lynching and burning at the stake in the South do not think of the monstrous horror of the crime which causes them. They do not think of the woman or child who

is assaulted by the negro. No animal could be as diabolical—no words can portray the animal passion in the negro when it surprises and seizes upon its prey.

In Thomas Dixon's "The Birth of a Nation," there is a scene where a young girl, a mere child, runs from the negro man who pursues her and jumps over a cliff, dashing her brains out rather than be caught by the negro fiend.

It is a true and authentic case and one of many. Thomas Dixon has fearlessly and accurately portrayed the true condition of affairs in the South, not only in regard to the Civil War, but of the white man in relation with the negro after the war.

Some negroes are not afraid of prison. They rather enjoy it. They sing and laugh and enjoy doing nothing, since they are instinctively lazy. The prospect of hanging does not frighten them sufficiently to induce them to control their passions. The only thing that they fear is torture!

The Southerner has known this for

years, and the Northerner soon finds it out when he goes to live among the negroes in the South. Of course, there are exceptions to all rules. There are some splendid, faithful negroes, but most of them have been spoiled through freedom.

The negro is a coward by nature, but his passions are so strong and untamed that they dominate him for the time being in those cases which lead to lynching and burning at the stake.

Do the people who criticize this custom in the South ever think of the agony of mind, both to the victim and to the family of the victim—the white girl whose life is ruined?

In a well-known case in the South, a young girl of fourteen was assaulted by a negro, and was afterwards found in the woods bruised, tortured, both mentally and physically. She was found to be completely insane. Her own father found her, and the sight of her, and her death, which followed a few days afterwards, caused him to commit suicide. The mother lived on for years, but

ended her last days in a private sanitarium. The brother of the girl went about in a dream. He was quite dazed by the horror of the thing—it was his only sister, and the sudden death of his father and the nervous condition of his mother completely ruined his life.

Did the newspapers publish this side of the story? Did the people who so freely and ignorantly criticize know or care for this side of the case? I think not!

Criticism, condemnation, so freely given, should be withheld because of the lack of knowledge in regard to the true status of such cases.

On Saturday evenings it is a custom for the negroes in the South to receive their pay for the week. They immediately buy cheap whiskey and hundreds of these negroes walk and drive through the country singing, yelling, shouting—some good-naturedly, others with hatred for their masters, and many with only one thought in their minds—a white girl—and the only thing which prevents the

realization of this desire is fear! Fear of torture!

The negro has to be ruled through his fear, his cowardice. This is a fact and is recognized by all people who know the true nature of the negro.

Spiritually, mentally and physically the negro is inferior. His very body, with its thick skin, kinky hair, and thick, sensual lips, prove this to be true.

Just as there are different types of animals so there are different types of human beings. This is recognized by the Northerner, and why is it that one rarely sees negro servants in Northern homes? It is because they are not wanted—even as servants. They are not acceptable to the Northerner, even in the states which are filled with negroes, whereas in the South they are treated kindly as servants and the exceptions, the good negroes, who are worth while, are recognized as good characters and encouraged and praised by the white people. They receive much love, those who are worthy to be loved, for the Southerner is quick to detect

goodness in any creature, and the first to be patient and just.

Every American citizen should know the history of his country, and, as the South is part of America, it is only right that the true condition of affairs should be recognized and accepted.

"You know, Mr. Green, *I do not believe in slavery,* in spite of being a Southern man, and I do not believe in capital punishment, and certainly I do not believe in lynching. Yet the reason, the cause, which leads to this hideous thing, lynching, should be considered.

"You know that I am broad in my views, that I am a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln and that I often prefer the Republican Presidents to the Democratic. You well know, Mr. Green, that the hardest times we had in this part of the country were under a Democratic President. Certainly no fair-minded Southerner can deny this, and that the Republican Administration is often intelligent and just. Too, most of us are victims of circumstances, of

environment. Did not most of us fight because it was for our country? We did not consider the cause. It was only that our country called us and needed us. And many of us were too young to have any definite ideas about the difficulty. Some of my best friends are Northern men, and I very much regret that a few bigoted and narrow-minded Southerners have caused us to be misunderstood as a whole. It is so in religion as well. A few fanatics can absolutely offset the good and true in an ethical system, distort its meanings, and not only bring an undignified atmosphere, but an utterly irregular one. But, of course, the fanatics cannot be eliminated; and they make themselves so conspicuous, while the real people are quiet and reserved. However, this is a question which cannot be decided by the North or South, or by any religious or political system. It will have to come through a slow and painful evolution. That alone can change the situation. For it is too complex and deep to be quickly eradicated."

"You are right, Algernon, but we would never dare talk this way before your Cousin Wade. He is so prejudiced against everything in the North. Perhaps because he is older and has suffered so deeply through the war, while you were younger and had hope, which is the great strength and inspiration of life. You look forward, while he could only look back upon ashes."

Laura entered the room abruptly, bringing a message that someone wished to see her father.

"I will talk to Mr. Green, Papa," she said prettily.

Payne Green interrupted with, "You mean that you will entertain me, Laura. You always do that, delightfully. Whatever you say interests me."

"Well, that is because we are kindred souls, Mr. Green—Eastern souls. And I think, Papa is too—a little, because after all this reading of Robert Ingersoll and Emerson is Eastern too. I think they were re-incarnations out of the East, these men, don't you, Mr. Green? Now, we will have a lovely

chat. I love to talk to you because you understand me perfectly!"

"That is because I am subtle. It takes a subtle person to keep up with your precocious young mind."

"I am not young, Mr. Green. I am frightfully old. What they call in the East 'an old soul,' you know. I am going to talk about myself, Mr. Green, to you. It doesn't bore you, I know. And, too, to be frank, I have always found myself rather an interesting subject. You see I think of myself because I am so different from most people. It is not conceit. It is analysis and love of truth! You know I like to get at the bottom of everything, just as you do, especially things pertaining to the soul. Too, I am trying to develop myself into something of a mystic. Notice that I say 'something,' Mr. Green. It is much too difficult and self-sacrificing to be a real mystic. But I like to eradicate as many faults as possible, and I can only do this by facing them fairly and studying myself carefully. But this characteristic of mine might be considered

quite normal and right in the Orient, but wrong in the Occident. Now, the question is, 'Who is right?' You think I am perfectly divine, at times, and Cousin Mary thinks me quite awful! She calls me a pagan. Poor Cousin Mary, she is so sweet but unintellectual!"

"The Orient, of course, Laura, is right," said Payne Green. "They have given many thousands of years to the study of the soul, and Max Müller was right in saying 'For wisdom, we must go to the East.' "

"Yes, but Cousin Mary took my 'Wisdom of the East' series away. I can never forgive her for that. I was really learning so much, Mr. Green. But in packing I slipped in a volume of Pythagoras, the Creed of Buddha, Emerson's Essays, and literally swore that I hadn't the remotest idea what had become of them! It was quite unnecessary, however, since I should have known Papa had a perfectly divine library. Scarcely an orthodox book in it! Think of it, Mr. Green. All heterodox—pagan, as Cousin Mary calls it, and ab-

solutely pure! You don't know what it means to me, Mr. Green, to find these books here, and I see now why I cannot think as Cousin Mary wishes me to think. Of course, it is because I have inherited my father's taste. Sometimes I think I am like him in everything. But in speaking of myself, Mr. Green, the reason I am so detached is because of the selfishness I sense in most people. An intellectual difference I can tolerate, but selfishness never. I regard it as a crime. Therefore, many people are criminals. Despite their fine manners, seductive ways, I can sense the inner man.

"You understand, Mr. Green," she said, "that I am not unkind, but I have a psychic gift which brings both joy and pain. So many swift and keen revelations come to me. There is no perfume about selfish people, for every beautiful thought has a perfume. This has been known in the Orient for thousands of years. A soul may have many faults and still exist, and maintain its perfume, but selfishness kills the soul,

slowly but surely. And, Mr. Green," she continued, "one of the worst forms of selfishness is the denial of motherhood. A woman who is not willing to become a mother is an abnormal, hideous creature, and a detriment to the race. You understand me, Mr. Green, for you are one of the few people I know who has studied Eastern literature, and apropos of this, you will understand why I am exclusive. It is impossible to like everyone and although we are told to love one another that was, of course, to love within reason. Christ himself was intolerant of ugliness and he loathed hypocrisy, driving the Pharisees out of the temple Himself."

"And, Mr. Green," she continued earnestly, "I may say this to you because you will understand and not think me eccentric. As to brotherly love, did you ever think that some of us are not brothers to the human family? For instance, a Martian incarnating upon the earth would not be a brother in the human race, and you know the ancient Occultists, who really knew everything and

who conquered time and space visited Mars and found that the Martians had no language, no spoken words. Their language was one of telepathy and they did not eat food, they absorbed nourishment through vibration! So you see the Martians are much more evolved and elegant than we, because after all talk is very crude, and although it is a social custom to eat in public, I personally have always considered it a most vulgar thing and I do admire the Martians. Their whole system is different from ours."

And then she laughingly said, "You will understand, Mr. Green, when I tell you that so far as brotherly love is concerned, I don't feel much of it. In fact I regard most human beings as my second cousins! Certainly not as brothers!

"You know, Mr. Green, that I love the poor, the humble, the weak, but I do not love the ugly. It is a spiritual impossibility."

"Yes," said Mr. Green, "I understand you, dear child. But remember that you

have an Oriental mind. The Occidental mind would think such statements eccentric, so do not speak to others so frankly. Sympathy, as you say, should be discriminating, as all things should be. It should be properly and intelligently directed."

"Yes, of course," said Laura happily, "I know you understand, dear Mr. Green. And don't you agree that most people who talk so much about loving everyone, this brotherly love business, either are insincere or frightfully anæmic! No normal, full-blooded, intelligent person can love everyone. It isn't possible. I know two women at present—one talks to me constantly of loving everyone, and she is really at heart trying to impress me. The other talks the same way. She is more sincere, she means it, but I heard from a mutual friend, a doctor, that she is suffering from pernicious anæmia. Of course, I knew it before the doctor told me."

# CHAPTER XIX.

## TROY.

"To have faith is to create."
—Michael Fairless.

LAURA found Newcomb College quite delightful as well as instructive. Her week-ends were spent with different friends in New Orleans, and as most Southern girls went to informal dances, in spite of being too young to make her debut, she had a great deal of social life and was tremendously admired. Laura met many young men, but surprised them by finding some gracious excuse to leave them and go into the drawing room to talk to the father or mother of the young girl whom she was visiting.

When time came for the Christmas holidays Laura was delighted at the thought of return to Troy Plantation. She took the steamer Natchez at New Orleans and went happily and gayly up the Mississippi River accompanied by

some young friends who were to visit her. The days on the plantation were short and happy, and she reluctantly left again for New Orleans. Her father was so well and happy, the plantation so cheerful. It was all a beautiful dream to her.

"I should have been here all along," she said to the old nurse. "When I think of those weird trees at Everton, Cousin Mary's orthodox views, Cousin Wade's hatred of the North, the formality of the house as well, I agree with Dick that it looked like a huge white tomb. . . ."

Upon her return to New Orleans the months passed swiftly, and she came to the plantation in June. Her father did not meet her at the Landing, and as she walked off the boat she was a little frightened when Dick said, "Your father couldn't come out to meet you. He has a headache. Nothing serious, Miss Laura."

"He is never ill, Dick. It must be more than a headache."

"No, Miss Laura, he says it is a headache, and I'm sure it is."

They drove solemnly to Troy. Laura was in a state of terrible excitement. She asked a dozen questions about her father which Dick answered to the best of his ability. There was a stillness, an unusual silence about the house as she entered it. The old Mammy came out to greet her, and before she could speak, Laura said, "I'm so unhappy, Mammy. I feel so strange, so frightened, so sad. What is it, Mammy?"

"Why nothing, Baby, you are jes' nervous. You come on into the house with me and I will show you. Nothing, honey. Your papa just got a headache. All gentlemen have a headache sometimes, and jus' cause you never seed your papa sick a little, ain't no reason why he can't get sick jus' the same."

"But you look so different, Mammy," she said, as she breathlessly walked into the house, while the Mammy said, "Ain't you shamed, honey, to think that your old Mammy would tell you a story,—a blessed lamb like you!"

Laura entered her father's room abruptly. "Where is he? Papa, Papa!" she cried.

"Yes, dear, I am coming. Just a minute."

Algernon Nichol entered from the other room, pale, thin, changed, terribly changed.

Laura rushed up to him and said, "Why, Papa—Prince—what is it?"

"Just a headache, dear. I will be all right now that you've come. Did not Mammy tell you that I have a headache?"

"But headaches would not make you thin and pale. You are all fooling me and it isn't right."

Her father tried to respond bravely, laughingly, but as he tried to laugh, she noticed that he caught hold of a chair near by.

"I will sit down, I think, a minute. This headache is a frightful nuisance, and makes me a little dizzy, too."

As he sat down Laura for the first time in her life lost all control and threw herself at his feet with a sob.

"Why, Laura," he said, "I am surprised at you. You, to be frightened over a headache."

"Mandy," he said, calling the old nurse, and then in a commanding tone, "Mandy, did you not tell Miss Laura that it was only a headache?"

"Yes, of course, sir. She's jus' a foolish little lamb and I'se goin' to take her right out of here. Why, honey, youse ought to be ashamed of yourself crying here. You know that I loves you and Gawd loves you too, but this is outrageous, greeting your papa like this, when you ain't seen him for so long. Good Lawd, you gets us all so sorrowful around here, and I've been decrating all day. Come right along with me and dry your tears. I got the nicest things in your room you ever seed."

Laura went out of the room slowly and when she got into the hall, she demonstrated another mood which no one had ever seen. Wheeling around suddenly she caught her Mammy by the shoulders, and said fiercely, "Why did you lie to me?" She said this in

such a convincing way that the old nurse saw that to deceive her was impossible.

"Hush," she said. "Talk low. Your papa told me, honey, and you know I have to do whatever he says. But it's no headache, and I know I can't fool you. It's his heart, but don't tell him, don't tell him that I told you, for Gawd's sake."

"Oh, my God, Mammy, what caused it? He always seemed to be so well and strong."

"Well, he's had so many shocks you know in his life, and even a brave man like that can't stand everything forever."

"Yes," said Laura, "and, too, I know I had no business going away. All of these foolish ideas about the higher education for women seem so futile, such a sacrifice made for pride, perhaps vanity, when being at home would be much more useful and fine."

"You're right, honey. I don't believe in all this tom-foolishness about educatin' good-lookin' girls myself, but

he's awful proud of your brains and wanted to have them sharpened up a little bit. But don't get so discouraged, honey. You can make him well. And, too, where is your religion? Where is your faith? Now, the difference between you and me is this—while you are crying and taking on and worryin' and hating higher education, I'se goin' to pray so hard that anything I ask I will get; if, for no other reason, that I ax so much of the Angels that they get tired of listening to me. That's the difference between the white people and the black. We black folks got a lot of faith, honey. You think we ignorant, but we wise, and anyhow we following the smartest man what ever lived and the nicest man, too. Some says he's God and some says he ain't, but the fact that he's the nicest man that ever lived is something, and He's the one that I prays to in the night-time and dawn, and gets up and starts breakfast, and then prays some more, and I certainly not goin' to waste any good time, cryin'. And I been hearin' your papa tell Mr. Payne Green

that you had some traits like a man, so brave and strong. Now if that is the truth, you got to show them off right quick, and the first time I sees any tears, I ain't goin' feel sorry a bit. I jes goin' bust out the house and go away and leave you here and then you have somethin' to cry about, 'cause nobody can't get along on this plantation without me. I'm the boss. I boss your paw, I bossed his maw before him, I boss Dick, an' all the good-for-nothin' niggers on this plantation, I boss the dogs, I boss that old Dago that goes up and down the road every mawning shouting so loud that he wakes us all up about nuthin', and answer me this question I ax you now—I ax you how you thinks you goin' to excape? Honey, I'm goin' to boss you so much that you don't know what struck you. I'm goin' to have you laffin' and jiggin'. If you don't know how to jig, you got to learn how. I'm goin' to have this house so gay and bright that all your papa's heart trouble goin' to bust out the window. Take wings and fly 'way. All

trouble, any kind of trouble, got to go away. Just the brightness going to stay! And if you don't help me, I sure ain't goin' to agree with your paw and Mr. Payne Green that you is brave. Of course, I feel sorry for you, honey, a little bit sorry, but I ain't got much time for sympathy, now!"

With this, the old nurse led Laura into her room, and said, "I'll be back in a minute, honey. I got to fix your supper and make you eat. And promise me to be cheerful, like a nice little lamb."

"Surely, Mammy, I promise," said Laura, trying to smile. She walked to the window and threw the heavy curtains aside. There was silence for a moment, and then a dog began to howl and a screech owl gave forth its unearthly cry. The cry sounded like a death knell, or a warning in the night.

# CHAPTER XX.

## REALIZATION.

ANON.

Mother of pity, hear my prayer
That in the endless round of birth
No more may break my heart on earth,
Nor by the windless waters of the Blest
Weary of rest;
That drifting, drifting, I abide not anywhere.
Yet if by Karma's law I must
Resume this mantle of the dust,
Grant me, I pray,
One dewdrop from thy willow spray,
And in the double lotus keep
My hidden heart asleep.

—From the Chinese.

 HE next morning the doctor came and made an attempt to deceive Laura about her father's condition. Seeing that the attempt was futile, he took her into his confidence, telling her that she could be of great assistance in prolonging her father's life. "It is the heart," he said. "He must be kept in a very quiet and

tranquil mood, and cheerful, if possible."

Laura did not answer. She was speechless. The shock of this realization swept over her like an avalanche. Her whole personality was submerged for a moment. After a long silence she said, "Doctor how long—how long —how many years can he live if I—if I am cheerful and watch his every mood?"

"Not years, my dear child," replied the doctor. "It's a question of months. Perhaps six months, if he has the proper care."

"Six months," answered Laura, "six months. You cannot mean that, Doctor. I am dreaming. It is all a dream. I am sure it isn't true. Why, only six months ago he was so well and happy."

"He looked well," answered the doctor, "but his heart has been affected for years. Ever since the death of your mother. The shock was too much. In fact, his life has been a series of shocks. Tremendous emotional experiences, which in time left their mark. His

condition is very deceptive, however, and with this kind of heart trouble, he may look quite well and yet go out suddenly."

"I understand," said Laura, as she caught hold of the chair beside her. "I understand." And then, without a tear she said, "I shall make the six months happy, and you must help me to deceive him in this way. Help me to make him think that he is getting better. In that way he can be happy for a little while. It can do no harm. His financial affairs are in good shape. Tell him each time that you see him that he is improving, and be clever about it, Doctor. This kind of deception is not wrong. It is kind, and in a way divine, for it is so helpful. You will do this, Doctor?"

"Yes, Laura, I will," said the doctor, solemnly. "You are a brave and wise girl and kind," he added tenderly.

"No, Doctor, none of those things. It is merely that I love, and that makes everything possible, you know."

As Laura spoke so earnestly, the doctor noticed two things which were sig-

nificant. She did not cry, and she caught the chair for support and not his arm. "This was symbolic," he thought. "It means that she can stand alone."

"You have the qualities of a soldier, Laura. I am glad, for you need them now."

Laura did not answer him. She did not seem to hear these words. Still clutching the back of the chair she turned her head suddenly. Her face was flushed, her eyes unnaturally bright. There was no sign of tears.

"Doctor," she said dreamily, "you are right. It was the shock. He loved her best and he is lonely here, even with me. He longs for my mother; he is always calling for her in the low, deep tones of his violin and in his dreams."

"That is very natural, Laura," said the Doctor.

"Very natural," answered Laura, "from the Occidental point of view. I understand what you mean, you would never understand if I told you what I mean. Who I am, for instance. Why I am here. Why I came back. The

yellow roses, the sun . . . ! But I must go to him now. I must go, Doctor. Come back tomorrow and remember to tell him that he is better. You promised, you know."

"Yes, Laura, I will. Good-bye for today, and be cheerful."

Holding out her hand to the doctor, Laura replied, "Good-bye, I shall be cheerful. I shall be gay." And as the doctor walked away he wondered at this strong girl with the deep mystical eyes. "So strange," he thought as he drove away. "I wonder what she meant by 'coming back'—the yellow roses—the sun!"

Laura went into the garden and gathered some flowers and walked back into the house, into her father's room, gayly. "Some flowers, Prince," she said. "The red roses you love, and good news, too. That doctor says you are better, lots better—that you only imagine now that you are very ill. You are really over the illness. It is just a question now of circulation and rest. That reminds me that I am going to give you an old-

fashioned remedy; one that Mammy believes in. I am sure it can do no harm, and it will please her so."

"Yes, dear, but what is that?" asked her father seriously. "I hope it doesn't taste bad. I hate the doctor's medicines, —so bitter and monotonous. But I will do whatever you say. You know that. I will try your medicine."

Touching the bell Laura summoned the old nurse. "Mammy," she said, "bring in some very hot water and some of that mustard that you believe in so much. Get some towels and a foot tub."

"Foot tub," said her father laughingly. "What on earth are you going to do to me?"

And then the old nurse said, "Now, you know, Honey, that your Papa is not goin' to let you give him a foot bath. That's my job. I'm black and I knows it. I'se a servant, and I knows it. I'se been a slave, and I knows it, and it's my place to give that bath, not yours. Whoever heard of a queen doing that?"

Laura wheeled on her suddenly and said, in her most commanding tone, "Mammy, do as I tell you, and do it quickly. Do you understand, Mammy?"

The old nurse bustled out mumbling to herself, and in a few moments was back. Laura said to her father playfully, "Put your foot out—I am going to take off your shoe." The old Mammy interrupted with, "Now, for Gawd's sake, Honey, that's my place, not yours."

"Well, I am glad you didn't say 'feet!' " said her father laughingly. "I think that is one of the ugliest, one of the most sordid words, in the English language. Having a foot is æsthetic, but having feet is abominable. So here is my foot." This he said while holding out his two very small feet.

"You are funny, Papa. Just like a baby at times. I saw you sit on your feet the other day—I mean foot, if you like that better. You know you really looked like Buddha."

"Yes, I like to sit that way and dream."

"You mean meditate. They call it meditation in the East. It is the wisdom of some former existence of yours brought over." This she said while the Mammy poured the hot water, and her father pretended that it was too hot. "It is not too hot at all. You are simply one of your old selves today—a baby, you know. Is he not funny, Mammy?"

"And did you ever see anything so white and helpless, so pitiful?" she added quietly and brushing a tear from her eye she leaned over the water to conceal her emotion, and then said in a strange voice, "Your veins are so blue, and one of them is a little swollen. Does it hurt you, darling?"

"Oh, no, fiddlesticks, Laura. Of course, it doesn't hurt." Then he said, "Mandy, this girl of mine tries to make a baby out of me. But I think I feel better already, just the same."

Laura did not answer. Finally she said, "Now rest for an hour. Lie back in your chair and sleep. Dream and forget, if you can. Just rest and be happy."

Several monotonous months passed, monotonous in the sense that Algernon Nichol was neither better nor worse. He remained in a negative state, sometimes going for a little drive, but most of the time confined to his room. Laura read him numerous books, told him marvelous and fantastic stories, played the piano, sang a little and was forever watching, waiting for some definite sign of improvement. But there was no change. The winter came on, Christmas Eve was near. For the first time in her life, she realized the irony of the words "Merry Christmas" with this horrible fear lurking in her mind. "I wish it would not come this year," she thought. The words "Merry Christmas" were like hideous, sinister monsters that hissed these words into her brain. It will not be a "Merry Christmas."

When Christmas Eve arrived her father, however, seemed a little more listless than usual and there was a sadness about him, which was so deep that it was magnificent; it was infinite.

When she entered his room, he said

to her, "Have old Mandy sit up tonight. The doctor says I am better, and I want to arrange some things for tomorrow myself. Tell her to come here."

"Yes, Papa, but I shall stay too, if you do not mind."

"I do mind, Laura, because the things I have gotten for you are a surprise. You can never guess what they are. I mean the things in those boxes from New Orleans."

Laura left the room reluctantly, and sent the old negro mammy to her master. "Come in, Mandy," he said, "and close the door. I have felt very weak in the last few hours. A strange weakness it is that has taken possession of me. My wrists are quite helpless, and I do not seem to see clearly and my own voice sounds very far away. I am not dizzy, and I have no pain, but it is a strange kind of weakness. Do you hear me, Mandy?" he said eagerly.

"Yessir, I'se right here."

"Go and tell Dick to come here."

"Yessir," said the old woman, as she left the room.

Dick entered the room with his hat in his hand, hurriedly, breathlessly. "Good evenin', Buddy, I mean Marse Algy. You sent for me, sir?"

His master looked at him, but did not seem to see him, and the negro servant was frightened at the strange look in his eyes. "Come closer, Dick, I want to talk to you and I cannot see you very well from where you are." And then he said rather strangely, "Can you hear me, Dick?"

"Yessir, of course, sir."

"Well, Dick, I do not want Laura to know that I am worse," and then, almost impersonally, he said, "that I am dying, but it has come over me all at once today. Not only the weakness but a premonition. Everything is seen through a mist, and my own voice sounds so very far away. Now, this is what I want done. I want Mandy to sit up here with me, and you are to stay near by in case she calls you for anything, and keep Miss Laura's door shut—shut tight. I want her kept out of here to-night. Pretend that I am arranging

some secret—a Christmas gift or something that she is not to see until tomorrow—tomorrow morning, and by that time it will be all over, and Dick, when it is—can you hear me, Dick?—I say, when it is, I want you to telegraph for Mr. Harrison and Mr. Payne Green, and now I want you to start a man on a horse for the doctor."

"Yessir, but shouldn't I telegraph for your cousin at once and Mr. Green?"

"Of course not, Dick. Don't you understand that if you sent for them Laura would certainly know because my cousins are so old now, she would know that it meant the end? That would never do. Now, I want you to be clever and do just as I tell you. I want you to laugh a lot and pretend that we are arranging a Christmas tree or anything in here. It must all seem very natural. Now, when you go out, you tell Mandy exactly what I have told you and come back soon. No, wait a minute. Get my violin. I will play a few variations,—something cheerful and pretty. Yes, that is it, that is the best way. That

will make her think that I am better. Give me the violin, Dick."

Dick, sobbing quietly and muttering under his breath, did not move. "What is that, Dick?—What did you say? Get the violin."

"Yessir, of course, sir. I was hunting for the violin."

"Well, it is right in front of you; there on the table. Give it to me and go and do as I told you."

Taking the violin Algernon Nichol tuned it up quickly and began playing a fragment of a waltz—a variation of some kind and ended with a Virginia reel, and he thought, "That is the thing to do, for I haven't played those old-fashioned things for so long."

While he was playing Laura burst into the room joyously. "Oh, I heard you play. I haven't heard you play those things for so long. I am so glad, glad. I knew you were better. Of course, you are."

"Of course I am," said her father. "And it is Christmas Eve and we should all be very jolly. Now run and make

me a mint julep. I am going to take a good drink, and then I am going to have those boxes brought in here and fix up these things myself. That is, if you will keep out of the room. If so, you will find a lovely surprise here in the morning."

The dim light in the room concealed the strange look in his eyes, and the determination to carry out his plan made the color come to his cheeks, and gave his eyes an unusual brightness, in spite of their strange expression. "You look like your old self, Papa. So well and handsome. A good color you have too. I will bring the drink," and she threw a kiss over her shoulder as she ran out of the room.

"Play some more, Prince. Play the Virginia Reel again. It is so quaint and beautiful. Remember how much Cousin Wade liked it."

Her father continued playing, while Laura ran into the hallway and said, "Mammy, listen to the violin. Is it not wonderful? The miracle has happened. It always does when you have

enough faith. You said so yourself! Stupid doctor, is he not? Well, give me the mint and the whiskey." Then she said merrily, "Of course I knew that doctor was wrong. He is a very nice man, but a little stupid."

She went back into her father's room. He was standing with his back to the mantel-piece. A bright fire burned in the hearth. He was still playing and did not stop, but smiled as Laura entered the room. "Standing up, Papa?" she said. "How wonderful. And here is your drink."

"Well, I am well now, Laura, and I am frightfully tired of that chair. You see the doctor was right. He told me I was improving, but he made a mistake, because I am quite well, you see. It is better than he expected," and, taking the drink, he looked at her happily and started to drink, and then stopped suddenly and said, as a strange mystical expression came into his eyes, one of remembrance and revelation, "Here is to you, dark-eyed . . . Egyptian. . . ."

"Thanks, Prince," said Laura. "You

know how I love Egypt, don't you? Perhaps we can go there after all, together. The change would do you good—or would you rather go to Spain? You like Spain best, of course. You love the waltzes, the red roses, the pretty fans."

"And pretty faces," her father said laughingly.

"Yes, that is true, but we shall go wherever you say."

"Run away now, and send in the tree and the boxes—the large ones."

And as she left the room again she ran into the old nurse, who said, "Your Papa certainly got well in a hurry, didn't he? He sure looks handsome too, but you got to keep out of the room. Dems the orders. He's fixin' a great surprise for you and you got to keep out and I'm goin' to help him. I be decoratin' all night too. I like the decoratin' best. Dick he do the hard work. Open the boxes, and I'll do the decoratin'. Sure is lot of fun, Miss Laura. Nothing like Christmas time, you know, Honey. You better go in and say good-night."

"Yes, I will, Mammy. It will be the

first night I will have slept well for many a long night. It is so wonderful not to be afraid."

Walking into the room swiftly she went up to her father and said, "Good-night, Prince. I will see you in the morning."

Her father standing, like the soldier that he was, said without a trace of emotion, "Yes, good-night. I will see you in the morning."

The door closed softly and Algernon Nichol stood by the mantel-piece for some moments, and listened to Laura walk across the hall and close the door to her room. Then walking slowly to his chair he sat down and put his head in his hands. The door opened quietly, and the old mammy entered the room.

"I'm here, sir," she whispered, and then she stopped abruptly and said: "Miss Laura's right. You just a baby. You got a notion in your head that you goin' to die and you ain't. Ought to be shamed to get such notions on Christmas Eve night. Don't you feel better since you had de drink? You just

imagine all dese things, and I tell you too, the Angels don't want you, Honey. You too fond of huntin' and huntin' on Sunday. I been tellin' you that all your life." But there was no answer. "You knows I been tellin' you that all your life," she repeated.

"Mandy," he said, "it is no use. I know you mean well, but a thing like this has got to be faced squarely, practically. I am very ill, and I know it. Bring me my pen and be quick. Now, get something for me to write on and hurry." He took the pen and paper from the old servant's hand and wrote:

"Laura, forgive. It was the better way. Death is not only sad, but gruesome. And I want you to promise not to see me. I wish to be remembered as you last saw me." As he tried to write more the pen fell from his hand. "Mandy," he said, hurriedly, "see that Miss Laura gets this in the morning, but don't let her come in here under any circumstances. Do you understand this? This is my wish, my command. The doctor will attend to everything.

I want Miss Laura to sleep and I know what is best. You are to follow me to the letter—you understand this? Very soon I shall be going into a coma. But whatever happens, remember to be quiet, above all things, to be quiet. Not only for her sake, but for the sake of decency and dignity."

"Yessir," said the nurse, while she noticed the whiteness which came into his face suddenly, and rushed into the next room for medicines.

"You need not get the medicines, Mandy. They won't do any good now, and, by the way. I don't want to be put to bed. I want to die in my chair. Sitting up. Leave me here and promise not to cry out. This must be as I say."

Dick entered the door solemnly. The two negro servants stood speechless. Their master sat calmly in his chair. There was a long silence. The old woman was wringing her hands and Dick muttered to himself again saying, "I wish the doctor would come."

And then the door opened suddenly,

but quietly. Laura walked into the room. "Your father's going to sleep, Honey, and you were told not to come back," said the old Mammy. But Laura was walking not in her sleep, but in some strange psychic state. Waving the servants aside imperiously she said, "There is something wrong—I felt it." And going a little closer she stopped suddenly and stood motionless. Without a moan or a tear she stood there for a moment and then her father looked up quietly. He looked straight at her and lifting up his arms said clearly, solemnly, "Rosa! Rosa!" . . .

Laura did not move. She stood petrified with grief. In another moment the soul of Algernon Nichol was gone.

# CHAPTER XXI.

## MEMORIES.

### "A FRIEND."

All that he came to give,
He gave and went again:
I have seen one man live,
I have seen one man reign,
With all the graces in his train.

As one of us, he wrought
Things of the common hour:
Whence was the charmed soul brought,
That gave each act such power;
The nature beauty of a flower?

Magnificence and grace,
Excellent courtesy:
A brightness on the face,
Airs of high memory:
Whence came all these, to such as he?

Like young Shakespearean kings,
He won the adoring throng:
And as Apollo sings,
He triumphed with a song:
Triumphed, and sang, and passed along.

With a light word, he took
The hearts of men in thrall:

And, with a golden look
Welcomed them, at his call
Giving their love, their strength, their all.

No man less proud than he,
Nor cared for homage less:
Only, he could not be
Far off from happiness:
Nature was bound to his success.

Weary, the cares, the jars,
The lets, of every day:
But the heavens filled with stars,
Chanced he upon the way:
And where he stayed, all joy would stay.

Now when the night draws down,
When the austere stars burn;
Roaming the vast live town,
My thoughts and memories yearn
Toward him, who never will return.

Yet have I seen him live,
And owned my friend, a king:
All that he came to give,
He gave and I, who sing
His praise, bring all I have to bring.

—Lionel Johnson.

LAURA remained in an apathetic state for days. Payne Green and the Harrisons were with her, but Laura did not seem to be conscious of their presence.

She would sit for hours gazing out of the window into space. Nothing seemed to matter. The old negro Mammy tried to comfort her and the good doctor, but no one could understand fully. Finally one day she said to Mr. Green, "I must go away from here. I must go somewhere and study. I must get into a different atmosphere. These constant reminders are killing me, they are too poignant."

"Yes, but you will be alone."

"Yes, but I am alone here, everywhere. People are like automatons to me. Their lips move mechanically and say meaningless things to me. You, Mr. Green, understand better than anyone else. But not quite—not even you can know."

"Yes," said her friend, "But you know that your father wanted you to marry. There are so many young men devoted to you. You will not even see them."

"None of them interest me, Mr. Green. I am quite alien to them. I have only one idea, and that is to get away, especially from Mammy and Dick

and his horse Dexter. It is too terrible to see them each day and not to see him. There is a shadow over the plantation. All of the negroes feel it. The overseer, the clerk—nothing is the same. They all miss him. Of course, it is beautiful that they loved him so, but makes it too difficult for me. I cannot forget for a moment even when I try. I am going away, Mr. Green. There is no use trying to stop me. The Harrisons are old, of course, but they have each other, and you, if I cannot endure the loneliness in New York City, where I mean to study, I shall go to Egypt."

"Yes, dear, but you cannot go to Egypt alone."

"Oh, yes, I can, Mr. Green. Girls are not so chaperoned as they used to be, and I am alone wherever I go. Don't you understand this?' And then a strange silence crept over Laura. She did not speak again.

Mr. Green left the room, and as he did so, he saw Mary Harrison sitting pathetically in a large chair in the parlor. "I think that Laura is quite determined

to go away, Mrs. Harrison. I would not try to stop her if I were you. It is really best, and I think the study will do her good, and perhaps the trip later on. Something must be done. I fear not only for her health, but for her mind. I have never seen such deep grief."

"If she goes, she will never come back," said Mrs. Harrison. "At least, I shall never see her again, and I shall be the next to go. Perhaps it is better so."

Laura went to Columbia University for a special course, and tried to forget, but in vain. Her heart was not in her work. Life was merely a philosophy.

One day as she sat in her room, listlessly turning over the pages of a book, some letters were brought to her, one of which was from Payne Green. The letter read:

"My dear Laura:

I have never wished to intrude upon you with advice of a personal nature, but I will not see you probably for months, as I am contemplating a hunt-

ing trip, and if the boll weevil works the damage to this crop now apprehended, I will not be able to come to you in New York. So won't you let my high regard for you and my interest in your welfare excuse the offering of unsolicited advice?

Your life is tragic beyond expression. Born of gentle, cultured parents, on your mother's death you became the sole solace and comfort of your gifted father, whom you worshiped, and as his comrade, you grew up petted and spoiled in an atmosphere of love, refinement and singular purity, possessing a clear, analytical mind, not common in men, most uncommon in women, a lover of truth for truth's sake, a nature sincere, loyal and transparently pure with an intellect almost unfeminine in its cold clarity; an artistic loving, sensuous temperament. Then, endowed with a hundred charms in face and form, you seemed one favored by the Gods, and created only for sunshine, happiness and love.

And as I remember you in your young girlhood—as we drew around the fire in your old home in Mississippi, our voices

grew tender and our eyes moist as we talked of the beauty of your young mother, the magnetism of your princely father, and you, the winsome, loving girl who would some day doubtless be alone and unprotected; the sorrows and tragedies which you must face, for we knew that your father was not in good health, though you did not know, and as we talked, I could close my eyes and hear the voices of the gentle, high-born women and chivalrous men of this old sweet dead South, and knew that you could not remain among them, but that destiny would take you to alien people and alien countries.

Stunned with grief at the loss of your father, you have not the remotest chance for happiness unless you will realize now that you cannot expect to find a man just like your father, for such men do not exist any more. They belong to the past—a beautiful past, and you cannot expect to know such men in this modern, materialistic age.

Marriage is an incident in the lives of many women, but to you right mating is essential. This I realize, and I realize how difficult it is for you, with

your penetrating, analytical mind, to love and admire the men whom you are apt to meet. At the same time, try to be philosophical, and realize that companionship means something, and that if you can admire a man, this means almost everything. You are at present spiritually bruised. You stand almost at the threshold of life. What will you do with it?

While to a man of my age the heart of a young woman is a closed book, yet I know that you have known no romantic happiness; you have known no love; that your heart has never been awakened;—but I am sure that to him who can say the magic words, which will unlock it, you can give infinite happiness.

My prayer is that he may deserve it. You are alone in life without a protector, when you most need one, and from your position, exposed to temptation, slander, calumny. You cannot fight the battle alone. I have no apprehensions as to your strength and I believe that your purity is such that you can walk in pitch and not be defiled. But you are defenseless against the

harsh judgment of the world you live in. Bitter as this is, it is true that your purity of life will not serve to keep your name unspotted. The very men whose advances you scorn will avenge themselves by doubting your virtue! Envious tongues will stab you and your sense of conscious rectitude will not keep the poison from rankling. You are entitled to a pure life and to an unsmirched name.

I know your loyalty and love of truth is such that to save yourself you would not pretend what you do not feel, but if some man whom you esteem and respect, failing to win your love, and yet offers you his name, knowing that you do not love him, I would have you weigh well the question before refusing. I hope that the man may come upon whom you can lavish the treasures of heart and mind which have been so cruelly repressed.

I shall not trespass again, but your helplessness has appealed to me profoundly, and to atone for the bitter unhappiness of the past, the future must hold some happiness in store for you. And I would not have you forfeit it by

any mistake on your part. And I would that I could help you find it.

With kindest wishes for your welfare, believe me

Always your friend,

Payne Green."

# CHAPTER XXII.

## THE CALL OF THE EAST.

"The things I seek are beyond money and beyond price. The wind and stars are not for sale. The Gods ask no fees for worship.

—Algernon Blackwood."

LAURA wrote and thanked her friend for his letter, but told him that she could not follow his advice, and that she was leaving for the Orient in a few weeks.

The next week, to her great surprise, Payne Green was announced. He was quite old, but not feeble, and with an alert step and bright eye, he walked into her sitting room. Holding out both his hands, he took her hands in his and looked earnestly into her eyes. "I had to see you again, Laura. We will never meet again, dear child. I wanted to see you once more."

Still holding her hands and looking into her eyes, he said, "I shall tell you something that no one has ever known—

not even your princely father. I loved Rosa Gordon. She regarded me merely a friend, but I worshiped her. She was my queen, my dream queen. I loved her imperious, royal ways—I loved her great dark eyes—her brilliant wit—her classic mind—I, too, love the yellow roses—the sun! All my days have been dream days. All through long, silent years the love, the longing, the unfathomable depths, despair, the battle between love and chivalry—for I too loved your father. He was my friend, my comrade, and I thank God that he never knew. I came here to pay homage, to say adieu, and to bring you my blessing, to leave you in the keeping of Allah, her God, your God, my God, for we, Laura, are Eastern souls, a group soul perhaps, reincarnated in a strange country. I love the South, of course, with a deep, passionate love; I love its gallant men, its beautiful women, the perfume, the grace. But more than that I love Egypt. I too would like to go home. In the South we stand among ruins. Once it was Egypt, Spain and

England; the Government, the slaves, were in some degree Egyptian; the color, the music, was of Spain; the blood was of England;—a superb combination, subtle and unique. To return to the South would sadden you, to remain here in New York would be futile. You cannot be happy here—you do not belong. You are right to go where you can speak of reincarnation, of destiny, of telepathy, of prophecy, freely. There you may speak of such things without being considered eccentric. The East is not the West, and I fear never can be. There invisible things are as potent as visible. For thousands of years wisdom has been used. Life in the East is a science. It is an art as well. We are only amateurs here, wildly grasping for material things, at least many are. For that reason I am glad that you are going away, even if you go alone, for in spite of your great loss you will find happiness, you will find companionship there. My spirit will be with you always. Through the law of telepathy

you will receive my thoughts. There can be no separation between us.

"Poor wounded child of the East! The Gods will protect you. The invisible presences will guide you always!"

As Laura stood listening to her friend, the sun fell upon her strong young face. She was silent. She seemed lost in some sudden realization. "Poor Mr. Green," she said, still gazing out of the window, as though she hated to look upon his face, to see the agony there, and still without looking she said, "Yours has been the saddest life. The rest of us have known death, but we have known the realization of love, and you, so patient, so kind, so brave, and always alone, cherishing your secret all through the long weary years, yet only giving out happiness and cheer to others. Your life has been a human epic, a classic indeed—a beautiful and realized ideal. Your courage is unique, your sacrifice divine."

And then again she said, without looking at him, "My poor Mr. Green. All of those days you were the gayest of

us all. No one ever guessed. How well I remember your brilliant repartee, the delightful toasts, the witty conversation at the dinner table, at Everton, trying to make Cousin Wade forget the war, and afterwards, my father, his terrible loss, to smile when the heart was breaking, all through the long, long years. I am glad you told me, dear Mr. Green, for it will make me more patient in bearing my sorrow. It will serve as a model of strength, a noble purpose and sublime unselfishness. How humble, how insignificant I feel now, how weak. But I shall try to be strong now and learn to smile, while the heart breaks, and more than that, I must do something worth while as a monument to him. Sometimes I have a strange dream of my father. I see him walking upon the clouds in some majestic glory. Great spirit trees stand magnificently in the sky, and golden birds fly calmly toward the sun. It is such a mystical dream and superb. I think the Gods love him, Mr. Green."

"Yes, Laura, and the Gods claim their own."

"But then, too, Mr. Green, of late I have had such frightful dreams, or visions, they are, rather, and it is because of my loyalty and continuous thought of my father. I will tell you one of the dreams, Mr. Green.

"It was in the deep of night, Mr. Green, and I found myself in a hospital. There was a woman dressed in white sitting at a desk, on which there was a green light.

"May I go upstairs?" I asked. "I want to see my father."

"Yes," she said, "he is just alive."

Without answering, I went upstairs, hurriedly. I found myself in a long, cold corridor; then a door opened suddenly, and I was in a small room—a typical hospital room, with a plain white bed in it.

On the bed I saw the figure of a man—thin and with an olive complexion. "I am in the wrong room," I said to myself—"my father is so handsome and fair. This man is not." But, as I looked again, I saw—to my horror—that it was my Father. Going hastily to

the side of the bed I saw that his eyes were closed, yet he was not asleep. His hands were folded helplessly across his breast. He did not speak, as I touched his hand.

"Papa," I said. "Papa, it is your little girl—your own baby. Don't you know, don't you hear me?"

After a long silence, he said, quietly, solemnly, *"I cannot remember."*

"But," I said, "you know my voice—my touch—you know your own—look at me, darling—look at me!"

Opening his great beautiful eyes, he looked at me searchingly, deeply, and then closed his eyes wearily, saying again, *"I cannot remember!"*

Without saying more I walked out of the room, and down the corridor—down the stairs, running for help. As I passed the office the woman in white said to me, "Where are you going?"

I answered, "For help; some one must help me to help him. My father is very ill."

"We are doing all we can," she added, professionally. "He has the

best care. This is the place for him, now."

"What is this place?" I asked. "I must take him away. I must take him home."

"No," she said, "he must remain here until he is better."

"'What is this place?' I asked again. "It seems uncanny—cold—weird. I don't like it," I added, hurriedly.

"It is a sanitarium," she replied calmly—"a Spiritual Hospital for those who have suffered too much. It is for the insane."

"Insane!" I shouted. "My Father was the most sane man I ever knew. How dare you bring him here?"

"You do not understand," she answered calmly. "It is worry, great agony of mind, which has caused this late development. You have caused it," she said, *'you!'*

"I? I, who loved him, worshiped him, and who never caused him a moment's sorrow in his life? You are unjust and impertinent. You are unkind to speak in this way."

"You do not understand. Listen, and I will tell you. All of your sorrows he has known, felt and endured—endured them courageously, philosophically, until one day you went up to a life-sized portrait of him and put your head—your cheek against his heart, and said, 'Why don't you help me? I cannot suffer any more—help me! My sorrow is too great—too horrible!' Your tears coursed down your cheek and fell upon his heart. Then you kissed his eyes, his brow, and said, 'You are so strong—so kind—certainly there is no death, and Heaven is more powerful than Earth; help me. I cannot stand any more.' Do you remember this day?" she asked, quietly.

"Yes," I said.

"From that day," she continued solemnly, "he has never been the same. At first he was wild with grief, trying always to help you, but Destiny was too strong; he could do nothing for you. He could not help you, but, in trying, he got himself, earth-bound."

"Earth-bound!" I cried.

"Yes," she answered. "He was one

of the most glorious spirits in the Kingdom. He was magnificent—like a God walking in the sky—and now—what is he? A helpless earth-bound spirit; he is on the Astral Plane; that is why he looks so ill and insignificant!"

Rushing away from this woman, without a word, I ran out of the house and at the gate, I saw three sisters of Charity. Going up to them, I said, "That woman, that terrible woman, in white, there, in that house tells me terrible things. I don't believe them. You will be truthful and kind. Tell me, is it true, the things she says about my loved one—there?"

Silently, they bowed their heads and said nothing.

" 'Tell me,' I said.

One of the nuns said, "It is true."

"But what are you doing here?" I said. "You are Roman Catholics; that place is a Theosophical Institution. I know it by the words—the terms that the woman used!"

"We all work together here," she said. "And he was always kind to our

Church. We are the three sisters he last saw upon Earth. Do you not remember?"

"Yes," I said. "But I have no time to talk to you now. I must go on. I must find some one to help me."

Running down the dusty road I encountered many faces, but they were all strangers to me. On, on, I ran in the dark, trying to find a friend. Finally I came to a hermit's hut. I knocked violently, and a strangely-dressed man came to the door, with a long, brown robe on.

"Tell me," I asked, "where can I find some one to help me?"

"I can help you," he said.

"Who are you—what are you?" I questioned, looking at this strange dress. "Are you a monk? I just saw three nuns down the road. I suppose you are all Catholics here."

"No," he said, "I am a Rosicrucian!"

"Yes,—but you are so near the Theosophists and the Catholics—I do not understand!"

"It is very simple," he said. "It is different here, and we are all Mystics."

"Yes," I replied, "but tell me—what shall I do about my father?"

"It is simple, but hard, too, dear child," he said. "Listen to me, and promise to obey me. Never cry for him; never talk to him; never go near him in your dreams, unless you can go to him with a smile. Never allow your sorrow to vibrate toward him in the subtle realms of the Ether. And try to be happy."

"How can I be happy when I have nothing but sorrow?"

"Then practice courage—poise—self-forgetfulness and soon the sorrow will change to joy."

"I will try," I said, "but it is very difficult; it is almost impossible."

"Not when you realize that all earthly life is illusion! It is only the Heaven world that matters. This experience will teach you that there is no death, and that the real life is here—not in your world," he said, tenderly.

I walked towards the door. "Good-bye, and thank you," I said. "You seem

strangely familiar. I have seen you before, I think."

"Yes, yes," he replied, "very often—my body is still upon Earth. It lies asleep at present in that great city in which you live; but I come here each night, to wait on the road, for you, for the lonely, undeveloped children of the World, such as you. Some of them are so frightened. They know even less than you, but they see the light from the Rosy Cross and come in and find rest."

"I did not see the light, or the Cross," I said. "I was too blinded by grief."

"Yes," he answered, "you did not see the light or the Cross, but you sensed *the perfume of the Rose.*"

"And, Mr. Green, along through this dream, as though it were in the background, I seemed to hear these words—which seemed to have some sequence to the vision:

"Seek not your own life—for that is death; but seek how you can best and most joyfully give your own

life away—and every morning fresh life shall come to you."

"Mr. Green, I must learn the beauty of sacrifice. In the book that we both love so well, "Bagavad Gita," it says that "the Gods nourished by sacrifice will grant you the feasts that you wish?"

*"The Gods of Sacrifice!* Renunciation is their motto and power is their symbol! They are men become Gods through the triumph of mind over matter, beauty over ugliness, of spirit over everything! These Gods lie sleeping in the sky! They do not sleep from weariness, but because they are only awakened to a particular call. When the vibration of a soul on earth is felt, they awaken from their sleep. This again is the Law of Correspondence, for the only call that reaches them is the call of Sacrifice. These Gods are terrible in their consistency. They do not awaken unless the sacrifice is real, and neither do they quickly release their ambassadors upon earth, for they are needed to continue their magnificent

work. They are relentless—they do not seek, but when they are sought they demand complete renunciation. They often give—they help the souls upon earth tremendously; but, in the end, after long and difficult tests of various kinds, after initiation into their world, and then they give anything one asks for, so long as the asking is impersonal: what they give must be for others—they serve the race and not the individual! This is their law: they give wisdom, revelation, material success; but all must be used for others! Everything must be transmuted into service. If the power they give is used selfishly, one is dismissed, abandoned, exiled! The Gods sleep again in the vast stillness of the Ether, in purple and magnificent dreams! To beseech, to plead again for recognition, is futile—they are like great planets which pass the earth impersonally, yet divinely and significantly, in symbolic power and repose.

"Sacrifice is only a theory with me, but a practice with you, dear Mr. Green.

And through this you must have great power. The spiritual law must grant most any request you make. Ask, pray, that I shall be able to begin this new life with confidence and repose, even if I am to be alone."

"You, Laura, cannot be alone. You are surrounded by invisible presences. The White Masters are with you always, but my continuous wish is that you will be happy, in spite of your great loss, for you have youth, and, sometimes I think that is most everything."

When the time came to go to Egypt Payne Green was the last person she saw. Laura waved to him as the steamer pulled away from the shore, and looked lovingly toward him until his figure was undistinguishable. Then she stood motionless looking at the place which only a few minutes ago had been seen and touched by her. The pier now could not be seen; only the horizon was visible. She looked around her and a keen, swift realization came to her that she was ut-

terly alone—she was among strangers. She was utterly detached. For a moment she felt lost, sad, bewildered, and then she turned and looked at the strangers and then looked again at the sky. "Everything is changed," she thought, but then as she looked at the sky again, "that is always the same. The Gods are there, and they claim their own."

She turned calmly and walked toward her room, clutching a little book in her hand, one which Payne Green had given to her. Slowly she entered her room. It was filled with flowers, yellow roses, jasmine and sun flowers. "Mr. Green," she said, and as she did so it seemed that he answered her through the law which they knew, and as she caught sight of herself in the mirror her own face appeared as a stranger too, and as she went closer to this strange face in the mirror she saw that it was strange because there was a new expression in it. She saw renunciation and power. As she stood there among the flowers, she opened the little book. It was

"Memories of Max Müller"—the story of a deep and unselfish love. On the front page of the book was written these words. They were words from the Pyramid Texts:

"O pure one, take thy seat in the barque of the Sun,
And sail thou over the sky,
Sail thou with the imperishable stars,
Sail thou with the unwearied stars."

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