

AUDREY.¹XIX.²

THE GOVERNOR'S BALL.

FOR an hour it had been very quiet, very peaceful, in the small white house on Palace Street. Darden was not there; for the Commissary had sent for him, having certain inquiries to make and a stern warning to deliver. Mistress Deborah had been asked to spend the night with an acquaintance in the town, so she also was out and gone. Mistress Stagg and Audrey kept the lower rooms, while overhead Mr. Charles Stagg, a man that loved his art, walked up and down, and, with many wavings of a laced handkerchief and much resort to a gilt snuffbox, reasoned with Plato of death and the soul. The murmur of his voice came down to the two women, and made the only sound in the house. Audrey, sitting by the window, her chin upon her hand and her dark hair shadowing her face, looked out upon the dooryard and the Palace Street beyond. The street was lit by torches, and people were going to the ball in coaches and chariots, on foot and in painted chairs. They went gayly, light of heart, fine of person, a free and generous folk. Laughter floated over to the silent watcher, and the torchlight gave her glimpses of another land than her own.

Many had been Mistress Stagg's customers since morning, and something had she heard besides admiration of her wares and exclamation at her prices. Now, as she sat with some gay sewing beneath her nimble fingers, she glanced once and again at the shadowed face opposite her. If the look was not one of curiosity alone, but had in it an admixture of new-found respect; if to Mistress

Stagg the Audrey of yesterday, unnoted, unwhispered of, was a being somewhat lowlier than the Audrey of to-day, it may be remembered for her that she was an actress of the early eighteenth century, and that fate and an old mother to support had put her in that station.

The candles beneath their glass shades burned steadily; the house grew very quiet; the noises of the street lessened and lessened, for now nearly all of the people were gone to the ball. Audrey watched the round of light cast by the nearest torch. For a long time she had watched it, thinking that he might perhaps cross the circle, and she might see him in his splendor. She was still watching when he knocked at the garden door.

Mistress Stagg, sitting in a dream of her own, started violently. "La, now, who may that be?" she exclaimed. "Go to the door, child. If 't is a stranger, we shelter none such, to be taken up for the harboring of runaways!"

Audrey went to the door and opened it. A moment's pause, a low cry, and she moved backward to the wall, where she stood with her slender form sharply drawn against the white plaster, and with the fugitive, elusive charm of her face quickened into absolute beauty, imperious for attention. Haward, thus ushered into the room, gave the face its due. His eyes, bright and fixed, were for it alone. Mistress Stagg's curtsy went unacknowledged save by a slight, mechanical motion of his hand, and her inquiry as to what he lacked that she could supply received no answer. He was a very handsome man, of a bearing both easy and commanding, and to-night he was splendidly dressed in white satin with embroidery of gold. To one of the women he seemed the king, who could do no

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² A summary of the preceding chapters may be found on the eleventh advertising page.

wrong ; to the other, more learned in the book of the world, he was merely a fine gentleman, whose way might as well be given him at once, since, spite of denial, he would presently take it.

Haward sat down, resting his clasped hands upon the table, gazing steadfastly at the face, dark and beautiful, set like a flower against the wall. "Come, little maid!" he said. "We are going to the ball together, you and I. Hasten, or we shall not be in time for the minuet."

Audrey smiled and shook her head, thinking that it was his pleasure to laugh at her a little. Mistress Stagg likewise showed her appreciation of the pleasantry. When he repeated his command, speaking in an authoritative tone and with a glance at his watch, there was a moment of dead silence ; then, "Go your ways, sir, and dance with Mistress Evelyn Byrd!" cried the scandalized actress. "The Governor's ball is not for the likes of Audrey!"

"I will be judge of that," he answered. "Come, let us be off, child! Or stay! hast no other dress than that?" He looked toward the mistress of the house. "I warrant that Mistress Stagg can trick you out! I would have you go fine, Audrey of the hair! Audrey of the eyes! Audrey of the full brown throat! Dull gold,—have you that, now, mistress, in damask or brocade? Soft laces for her bosom, and a yellow bloom in her hair. It should be dogwood, Audrey, like the coronal you wore on May Day. Do you remember, child? The white stars in your hair, and the May-pole all aflutter, and your feet upon the green grass"—

"Oh, I was happy then!" cried Audrey, and wrung her hands. Within a moment, however, she was calm again, and could look at him with a smile. "I am only Audrey," she said. "You know that the ball is not for me. Why then do you tell me that I must go? It is your kindness; I know that it is your kindness that speaks. But yet—but

yet"—She gazed at him imploringly ; then from his steady smile caught a sudden encouragement. "Oh!" she exclaimed, with a gesture of quick relief, and with tremulous laughter in her face and voice,— "oh, you are mocking me! You only came to show how a gentleman looks who goes to a Governor's ball!"

For the moment, in her relief at having read his riddle, there slipped from her the fear of she knew not what,— the strangeness and heaviness of heart that had been her portion since she came to Williamsburgh. Leaving the white wall against which she had leaned, she came a little forward, and with gayety and grace dropped him a curtsy. "Oh, the white satin like the lilies in your garden!" she laughed. "And the red heels to your shoes, and the gold-fringed sword knot, and the velvet scabbard! Ah, let me see your sword, how bright and keen it is!"

She was Audrey of the garden, and Haward, smiling, drew his rapier and laid it in her hands. She looked at the golden hilt, and passed her brown fingers along the gleaming blade. "Stainless," she said, and gave it back to him.

Taking it, he took also the hand that had proffered it. "I was not laughing, child," he said. "Go to the ball thou shalt, and with me. What! Thou art young and fair. Shalt have no pleasure"—

"What pleasure in that?" cried Audrey. "I may not go, sir; nay, I will not go!"

She freed her hand, and stood with heaving bosom and eyes that very slowly filled with tears. Haward saw no reason for her tears. It was true that she was young and fair; true, also, that she had few pleasures. Well, he would change all that. The dance,—was it not woven by those nymphs of old, those sprites of open spaces in the deep woods, from whose immemorial company she must have strayed into this present time? Now at the Palace the candles were burning

for her, for her the music was playing. Her welcome there amidst the tinsel people? Trust him for that: he was what he was, and could compass greater things than that would be. Go she should, because it pleased him to please her, and because it was certainly necessary for him to oppose pride with pride, and before the eyes of Evelyn demonstrate his indifference to that lady's choice of Mr. Lee for the minuet and Mr. Lightfoot for the country dance. This last thought had far to travel from some unused, deep-down quagmire of the heart, but it came. For the rest, the image of Audrey decked in silk and lace, turned by her apparel into a dark Court lady, a damsel in waiting to Queen Titania, caught his fancy in both hands. He wished to see her thus, — wished it so strongly that he knew it would come to pass. He was a gentleman who had acquired the habit of having his own way. There had been times when the price of his way had seemed too dear; when he had shrugged his shoulders and ceased to desire what he would not buy. To-night he was not able to count the cost. But he knew — he knew cruelly well — how to cut short this fruitless protest of a young girl who thought him all that was wise and great and good.

"So you cannot say 'yes' to my asking, little maid?" he began, quiet and smiling. "Cannot trust me that I have reasons for the asking? Well, I will not ask again, Audrey, since it is so great a thing" —

"Oh," cried Audrey, "you know that I would die for you!" The tears welled over, but she brushed them away with a trembling hand; then stood with raised face, her eyes soft and dewy, a strange smile upon her lips. She spoke at last as simply as a child: "Why you want me, that am only Audrey, to go with you to the Palace yonder, I cannot tell. But I will go, though I am only Audrey, and I have no other dress than this" —

Haward got unsteadily to his feet, and

lightly touched the dark head that she bowed upon her hands. "Why, now you are Audrey again," he said approvingly. "Why, child, I would do you a pleasure!" He turned to the player's wife. "She must not go in this guise. Have you no finery stowed away?"

Now, Mistress Stagg, though much scandalized, and very certain that all this would never do, was in her way an artist, and could see as in a mirror what bare throat and shoulders, rich hair drawn loosely up, a touch of rouge, a patch or two, a silken gown, might achieve for Audrey. And after all, had not Deborah told her that the girl was Mr. Haward's ward, not Darden's, and that though Mr. Haward came and went as he pleased, and was very kind to Audrey, so that Darden was sure of getting whatever the girl asked for, yet she was a good girl, and there was no harm? For the talk that day, — people were very idle, and given to thinking the forest afire when there was only the least curl of smoke. And in short and finally, it was none of her business; but with the aid of a certain chest upstairs, she knew what she could do! To the ball might go a beauty would make Mistress Evelyn Byrd look to her laurels!

"There's the birthday dress that Madam Carter sent us only last week," she began hesitatingly. "It's very beautiful, and a'most as good as new, and 't would suit you to a miracle — But I vow you must not go, Audrey! . . . To be sure, the damask is just the tint for you, and there are roses would do for your hair. But la, sir, you know 't will never do, never in this world."

Half an hour later, Haward rose from his chair and bowed low as to some high-born and puissant dame. The fever that was now running high in his veins flushed his cheek and made his eyes exceedingly bright. When he went up to Audrey, and, in graceful mockery of her sudden coming into her kingdom, took her hand and, bending, kissed it, the picture that

they made cried out for some painter to preserve it. Her hand dropped from his clasp, and buried itself in rich folds of flowered damask; the quick rise and fall of her bosom stirred soft, yellowing laces, and made to flash like diamonds some ornaments of marcasite; her face was haunting in its pain and bewilderment and great beauty, and in the lie which her eyes gave to the false roses beneath those homes of sadness and longing. She had no word to say; she was "only Audrey," and she could not understand. But she wished to do his bidding, and so, when he cried out upon her melancholy, and asked her if 't were indeed a Sunday in New England instead of a Saturday in Virginia, she smiled, and strove to put on the mind as well as the garb of a gay lady who might justly go to the Governor's ball.

Half frightened at her own success, Mistress Stagg hovered around her, giving this or that final touch to her costume; but it was Haward himself who put the roses in her hair. "A little longer, and we will walk once more in my garden at Fair View," he said. "June shall come again for us, and we will tread the quiet paths, my sweet, and all the roses shall bloom again for us. There, you are crowned! Hail, Queen!"

Audrey felt the touch of his lips upon her forehead, and shivered. All her world was going round; she could not steady it, could not see aright, knew not what was happening. The strangeness made her dizzy. She hardly heard Mistress Stagg's last protest that it would never do, — never in the world; hardly knew when she left the house. She was out beneath the stars, moving toward a lit Palace whence came the sound of violins. Haward's arm was beneath her hand; his voice was in her ear, but it was as the wind's voice, whose speech she did not understand. Suddenly they were within the Palace garden, with its winding, torchlit walks, and the terraces at the side; suddenly, again, they had mounted

the Palace steps, and the doors were open, and she was confronted with lights and music and shifting, dazzling figures. She stood still, clasped her hands, and gave Haward a piteous look. Her face, for all its beauty and its painted roses, was strangely the child's face that had lain upon his breast, where he knelt amid the corn, in the valley between the hills, so long ago. He gave her mute appeal no heed. The Governor's guests, passing from room to room, crossed and recrossed the wide hall, and down the stairway, to meet a row of gallants impatient at its foot, came fair women, one after the other, the flower of the colony, clothed upon like the lilies of old. Haward, entering with Audrey, saw Mr. Lee at the stairfoot, and, raising his eyes, was aware of Evelyn descending alone and somewhat slowly, all in rose color, and with a smile upon her lips.

She was esteemed the most beautiful woman in Virginia, the most graceful and accomplished. Wit and charm and fortune were hers, and the little gay world of Virginia had mated her with Mr. Marmaduke Haward of Fair View. Therefore that portion of it that chanced to be in the hall of the Governor's house withdrew for the moment its attention from its own affairs, and bestowed it upon those of the lady descending the stairs, and of the gold-and-white gentleman who, with a strange beauty at his side, stood directly in her path. It was a very wise little world, and since yesterday afternoon had been fairly bursting with its own wisdom. It knew all about that gypsy who had come to town from Fair View parish, — "La, my dear, just the servant of a minister!" — and knew to a syllable what had passed in the violent quarrel to which Mr. Lee owed his good fortune.

That triumphant gentleman now started forward, and, with a low bow, extended his hand to lead to the ballroom this rose-colored paragon and cynosure of all eyes. Evelyn smiled upon him, and

gave him her scarf to hold, but would not be hurried; must first speak to her old friend Mr. Haward, and tell him that her father's foot could now bear the shoe, and that he might appear before the ball was over. This done, she withdrew her gaze from Haward's strangely animated, vividly handsome countenance, and turned it upon the figure at his side. "Pray present me!" she said quickly. "I do not think I have the honor of knowing" —

Audrey raised her head, that had been bent, and looked again, as she had looked yesterday, with all her innocent soul and heavy heart, into the eyes of the princess. The smile died from Evelyn's lips, and a great wave of indignant red surged over face and neck and bosom. The color fled, but not the bitter anger. So he could bring his fancy there! Could clothe her that was a servant wench in a splendid gown, and flaunt her before the world — before the world that must know — oh, God! must know how she herself loved him! He could do this after that month at Westover! She drew her breath, and met the insult fairly. "I withdraw my petition," she said clearly. "Now that I bethink me, my acquaintance is already somewhat too great. Mr. Lee, shall we not join the company? I have yet to make my curtsy to his Excellency."

With head erect, and with no attention to spare from the happy Mr. Lee, she passed the sometime suitor for her hand and the apple of discord which it had pleased him to throw into the assembly. Audrey watched her as she went, but from Haward's mind she slipped at once. His eyes were bright, his cheeks flushed; he stopped a passing gentleman of his acquaintance, and in a raised voice began to ask into how many factions the clergy in convention had split that day, and what minister was to have the honor of preaching before the Governor on the morrow. "Now it is my turn," said the acquaintance in his ear. "How many

bottles of wine have you drunk to-day, and what the devil do you mean by offering insult to every woman here?"

A whisper ran around the hall. Audrey heard suppressed laughter, and heard a speech which she did not understand, but which was uttered in an angry voice, much like Mistress Deborah's when she chided. A sudden terror of herself and of Haward's world possessed her. She turned where she stood in her borrowed plumage, and clung to his hand and arm. "Let me go," she begged. "It is all a mistake, — all wrong. Let me go, — let me go."

He laughed at her, shaking his head and looking into her beseeching face with shining, far-off eyes. "Thou dear fool!" he said. "The ball is made for thee, and all these folk are here to do thee honor!" Holding her by the hand, he moved with her toward a wide doorway, through which could be seen a greater throng of beautifully dressed ladies and gentlemen. Music came from this room, and she saw that there were dancers, and that beyond them, upon a sort of dais, and before a great carved chair, stood a fine gentleman who she knew must be his Excellency the Governor of Virginia.

XX.

THE UNINVITED GUEST.

"Mistress Audrey?" said the Governor graciously, as the lady in damask rose from her curtsy. "Mistress Audrey whom? Mr. Haward, you gave me not the name of the stock that hath flowered in so beauteous a bloom."

"Why, sir, the bloom is all in all," answered Haward. "What root it springs from matters not. I trust that your Excellency is in good health, — that you feel no touch of our seasoning fever?"

"I asked the lady's name, sir," said the Governor pointedly. He was stand-

ing in the midst of a knot of gentlemen, members of the Council and officers of the colony. All around the long room, seated in chairs arow against the walls, or gathered in laughing groups, or moving about with a rustle and gleam of silk, were the Virginians his guests. From the gallery, where were bestowed the musicians out of three parishes, floated the pensive strains of a minuet, and in the centre of the polished floor, under the eyes of the company, several couples moved and postured through that stately dance.

"The lady is my ward," said Haward lightly. "I call her Audrey. Child, tell his Excellency your other name."

If he thought at all, he thought that she could do it. But such an estray, such a piece of flotsam, was Audrey that she could not help him out. "They call me Darden's Audrey," she explained to the Governor. "If I ever heard my father's name, I have forgotten it."

Her voice, though low, reached all those who had ceased from their own concerns to stare at this strange guest, this dark-eyed, shrinking beauty, so radiantly attired. The whisper had preceded her from the hall: there had been fluttering and comment enough as, under the fire of all those eyes, she had passed with Haward to where stood the Governor receiving his guests. But the whisper had not reached his Excellency's ears. In London he had been slightly acquainted with Mr. Marmaduke Haward, and now knew him for a member of his Council, and a gentleman of much consequence in that Virginia which he had come to rule. Moreover, he had that very morning granted a favor to Mr. Haward, and by reason thereof was inclined to think amiably of the gentleman. Of the piece of dark loveliness whom the Virginian had brought forward to present, who could think otherwise? But his Excellency was a formal man, punctilious, and cautious of his state. The bow with which he received

the strange lady's curtsy had been profound; in speaking to her he had made his tones honey-sweet, while his compliment quite capped the one just paid to Mistress Evelyn Byrd. And now it would appear that the lady had no name! Nay, from the looks that were being exchanged, and from the tittering that had risen amongst the younger of his guests, there must be more amiss than that! His Excellency frowned, drew himself up, and turned what was meant to be a searching and terrible eye upon the recreant in white satin. Audrey caught the look, for which Haward cared no whit. Oh, she knew that she had no business there,—she that only the other day had gone barefoot on Darden's errands, had been kept waiting in hall or kitchen of these people's houses! She knew that, for all her silken gown, she had no place among them; but she thought that they were not kind to stare and whisper and laugh, shaming her before one another and before him. Her heart swelled; to the dreamy misery of the day and evening was added a passionate sense of hurt and wrong and injustice. Her pride awoke, and in a moment taught her many things, though among them was no distrust of him. Brought to bay, she put out her hand and found a gate; pushed it open, and entered upon her heritage of art.

The change was so sudden that those who had stared at her sourly or scornfully, or with malicious amusement or some stirrings of pity, drew their breath and gave ground a little. Where was the shrinking, frightened, unbidden guest of a moment before, with downcast eyes and burning cheeks? Here was a proud and easy and radiant lady, with witching eyes and a wonderful smile. "I am only Audrey, your Excellency," she said, and curtsied as she spoke. "My other name lies buried in a valley amongst far-off mountains." She slightly turned, and addressed herself to a portly, velvet-clad gentleman of a very

authoritative air, who, arriving late, had just shouldered himself into the group about his Excellency. "By token," she smiled, "of a gold moldore that was paid for a loaf of bread."

The new Governor appealed to his predecessor. "What is this, Colonel Spotswood, what is this?" he demanded, somewhat testily, of the opep-mouthed gentleman in velvet.

"Odso!" cried the latter. "'Tis the little maid of the sugar tree! — Marmaduke Haward's brown elf grown into the queen of all the fairies!" Crossing to Audrey, he took her by the hand. "My dear child," he said, with a benevolence that sat well upon him, "I always meant to keep an eye upon thee, to see that Mr. Haward did by thee all that he swore he would do. But at first there were cares of state, and now for five years I have lived at Germanna, halfway to thy mountains, where echoes from the world seldom reach me. Permit me, my dear." With a somewhat cumbrous gallantry, the innocent gentleman, who had just come to town and knew not the gossip thereof, bent and kissed her upon the cheek.

Audrey curtsied with a bright face to her old acquaintance of the valley and the long road thence to the settled country. "I have been cared for, sir," she said. "You see that I am happy."

She turned to Haward, and he drew her hand within his arm. "Ay, child," he said. "We are keeping others of the company from their duty to his Excellency. Besides, the minuet invites. I do not think I have heard music so sweet before to-night. Your Excellency's most obedient servant! Gentlemen, allow us to pass." The crowd opened before them, and they found themselves in the centre of the room. Two couples were walking a minuet; when they were joined by this dazzling third, the ladies bridled, bit their lips, and shot Parthian glances.

It was very fortunate, thought Au-

drey, that the Widow Constance had once, long ago, taught her to dance, and that, when they were sent to gather nuts or myrtle berries or fagots in the woods, she and Barbara were used to taking hands beneath the trees and moving with the glancing sunbeams and the nodding saplings and the swaying grapevine trailers. She that had danced to the wind in the pine tops could move with ease to the music of this night. And since it was so that with a sore and frightened and breaking heart one could yet, in some strange way, become quite another person, — any person that one chose to be, — these cruel folk should not laugh at her again! They had not laughed since, before the Governor yonder, she had suddenly made believe that she was a care-free, great lady. Well, she would make believe to them still.

Her eyes were as brilliant as Haward's that shone with fever; a smile stayed upon her lips; she moved with dignity through the stately dance, scarce erring once, graceful and fine in all that she did. Haward, enamored, his wits afire, went mechanically through the oft-trod measure, and swore to himself that he held in his hand the pearl of price, the nonpareil of earth. In this dance and under cover of the music they could speak to each other unheard of those about them.

"'Queen of all the fairies,' did he call you?" he asked. "That was well said. When we are at Fair View again, thou must show me where thou wonnest with thy court, in what moonlit haunt, by what cool streams" —

"I would I were this night at Fair View glebe house," said Audrey. "I would I were at home in the mountains."

Her voice, sunken with pain and longing, was for him alone. To the other dancers, to the crowded room at large, she seemed a brazen girl, with beauty to make a goddess, wit to mask as a great lady, effrontery to match that of

the gentleman who had brought her here. The age was free, and in that London which was dear to the hearts of the Virginians ladies of damaged reputation were not so unusual a feature of fashionable entertainments as to receive any especial notice. But Williamsburgh was not London, and the dancer yonder, who held her rose-crowned head so high, was no lady of fashion. They knew her now for that dweller at Fair View gates of whom, during the summer just past, there had been whispering enough. Evidently, it was not for naught that Mr. Marmaduke Haward had refused invitations, given no entertainments, shut himself up at Fair View, slighting old friends and evincing no desire to make new ones. Why, the girl was a servant, — nothing more nor less; she belonged to Gideon Darden, the drunken minister; she was to have married Jean Hugon, the half-breed trader. Look how the Governor, enlightened at last, glowered at her; and how red was Colonel Spotswood's face; and how Mistress Evelyn Byrd, sitting in the midst of a little court of her own, made witty talk, smiled upon her circle of adorers, and never glanced toward the centre of the room and the dancers there!

"You are so sweet and gay to-night," said Haward to Audrey. "Take your pleasure, child, for it is a sad world, and the blight will fall. I love to see you happy."

"Happy!" she answered. "I am not happy!"

"You are above them all in beauty," he went on. "There is not one here that's fit to tie your shoe."

"Oh me!" cried Audrey. "There is the lady that you love, and that loves you. Why did she look at me so, in the hall yonder? And yesterday, when she came to Mistress Stagg's, I might not touch her or speak to her! You told me that she was kind and good and pitiful. I dreamed that she might let me serve her when she came to Fair View."

"She will never come to Fair View," he said, "nor shall I go again to Westover. I am for my own house now, you brown enchantress, and my own garden, and the boat upon the river. Do you remember how sweet were our days in June? We will live them over again, and there shall come for us, besides, a fuller summer" —

"It is winter now," said Audrey, with a sobbing breath, "and cold and dark! I do not know myself, and you are strange. I beg you to let me go away. I wish to wash off this paint, to put on my own gown. I am no lady; you do wrong to keep me here. See, all the company are frowning at me! The minister will hear what I have done and be angry, and Mistress Deborah will beat me. I care not for that, but you — Oh, you have gone far away, — as far as Fair View, as far as the mountains! I am speaking to a stranger" —

In the dance their raised hands met again. "You see me, you speak to me at last," he said ardently. "That other, that cold brother of the snows, that paladin and dream knight that you yourself made and dubbed him me, — he has gone, Audrey; nay, he never was! But I myself, I am not abhorrent to you?"

"Oh," she answered, "it is all dark! I cannot see — I cannot understand" —

The time allotted to minuets having elapsed, the music ceased, and the performers withdrew to a deep window looking out upon the gardens. The master of ceremonies, who had been summoned a moment before to the Governor's side, now came mincing through the crowd, and addressed himself in a low voice to Haward: "My painful duty, sir, — his Excellency the Governor desires Mr. Marmaduke Haward to withdraw with this uninvited lady from the assembly. His Excellency may not here and now further resent the indignity which Mr. Haward has put upon his Excellency's guests, but to-morrow" —

Haward looked at his Excellency's mouthpiece with eyes that saw nothing beyond the fantasies of his fevered brain's creating. "Fellow, you forget yourself," he said serenely. "If 't were worth my while, I would chastise you. His Excellency is my very good friend, and I myself invited the lady. She is my ward, and fair and noble."

Waving aside the amazed and indignant functionary, he turned to Audrey. "Here is the music again, child, and we must dance with the rest of the world. You shall have pleasure to your heart's content." He touched the roses in her hair. "They are withering in this heat, — it is a stifling night. Why have the servants lit so many candles? See, there are scores of fresh ones burning!"

"There are no more than at first," said Audrey wonderingly.

The musicians playing an ancient, lively air, a number of ladies and gentlemen, young, gayly dressed, and light of heart as of heels, engaged in a country dance. When they were joined by Mr. Marmaduke Haward and his shameless companion, there arose a great rustling and whispering. A young girl in green taffeta was dancing alone, wreathing in and out between the silken, gleaming couples, coquetting with the men by means of fan and eyes, but taking hands and moving a step or two with each sister of the dance. When she approached Audrey, the latter smiled and extended her hand, because that was the way the lady nearest her had done. But the girl in green stared coldly, put her hand behind her, and, with the very faintest salute to Mr. Marmaduke Haward, danced on her way. For one moment the smile died on Audrey's lips; then it came resolutely back, and she held her head high.

The men, forming in two rows, drew their rapiers with a flourish, and, crossing them high overhead, made an arch of steel under which the women must pass. Haward's blade touched that of his acquaintance of the hall. "I have

been leaning upon the back of a lady's chair," said the latter gruffly, under cover of the music and the clashing steel, — "a lady dressed in rose color, who's as generous (to all save one poor devil) as she is fair. I promised her I would take her message; the Lord knows I would go to the bottom of the sea to give her pleasure! She says that you are not yourself; begs that you will go quietly away" —

An exclamation from the man next him, and a loud murmur mixed with some laughter from those in the crowded room who were watching the dancers, caused the gentleman to break off in the middle of his message. He glanced over his shoulder; then, with a shrug, turned to his vis-à-vis in white satin. "Now you see that 't will not answer, — not in Virginia. The women — bless them! — have a way of cutting Gordian knots" —

A score of ladies, one treading in the footsteps of another, should have passed beneath the flashing swords. But there had thrust itself into their company a plague spot, and the girl in green taffeta and a matron in silver brocade, between whom stood the hateful presence, indignantly stepped out of line and declined to dance. The fear of infection spreading like wildfire, the ranks refused to close, and the company was thrown into confusion. Suddenly the girl in green, by nature a leader of her kind, walked away, with a toss of her head, from the huddle of those who were uncertain what to do, and joined her friends among the spectators, who received her with acclaim. The sound and her example were warranty enough for the cohort she had quitted. A moment, and it was in virtuous retreat, and the dance was broken up.

The gentlemen, who saw themselves summarily deserted, abruptly lowered their swords. One laughed; another, flown with wine, gave utterance to some coarse pleasantry; a third called to the musicians to stop the music. Darden's

Audrey stood alone, brave in her beautiful borrowed dress and the color that could not leave her cheeks. But her lips had whitened, the smile was gone, and her eyes were like those of a hunted deer. She looked mutely about her: how could she understand, who trusted so completely, who lived in a labyrinth without a clue, who had built her dream world so securely that she had left no way of egress for herself? These were cruel people! She was mad to get away, to tear off this strange dress, to fling herself down in the darkness, in the woods, hiding her face against the earth! But though she was only Audrey and so poor a thing, she had for her portion a dignity and fineness of nature that was a stay to her steps. Barbara, though not so poor and humble a maid, might have burst into tears, and run crying from the room and the house; but to do that Audrey would have been ashamed. It was easier to stand there; and when Haward called her name, bidding her to his side, she went as quietly and proudly as a king's daughter.

"It was you, Mr. Corbin, that laughed, I think?" said Haward. "To-morrow I shall send to know the reason of your mirth. Mr. Everard, you will answer to me for that pretty oath. Mr. Travis, there rests the lie that you uttered just now: stoop and take it again." He flung his glove at Mr. Travis's feet.

A great hubbub and exclamation arose. Mr. Travis lifted the glove with the point of his rapier, and in a loud voice repeated the assertion which had given umbrage to Mr. Haward of Fair View. That gentleman sprang unsteadily forward, and the blades of the two crossed in dead earnest. A moment, and the men were forced apart; but by this time the whole room was in commotion. The musicians craned their necks over the gallery rail, a woman screamed, and half a dozen gentlemen of years and authority started from the crowd of witnesses to the affair and made toward the centre of the

room, with an eye to preventing further trouble. Where much wine had been drunken and twenty rapiers were out, matters might go from bad to worse.

Another was before them. A lady in rose color had risen from her chair and glided across the polished floor to the spot where trouble was brewing. "Gentlemen, for shame!" she cried. Her voice was bell-like in its clear sweetness, final in its grave rebuke and its recall to sense and decency. She was Mistress Evelyn Byrd, who held sovereignty in Virginia, and at the sound of her voice, the command of her raised hand, the clamor suddenly ceased, and the angry group, parting, fell back as from the presence of its veritable queen.

Evelyn went up to Audrey and took her by the hand. "I am not tired of dancing, as were those ladies who have left us," she said, with a smile, and in a sweet and friendly voice. "See, the gentlemen are waiting! Let us finish out this measure, you and me."

At her gesture of command the lines that had so summarily broken re-formed. Back into the old air swung the musicians; up went the swords, crossing overhead with a ringing sound, and beneath the long arch of protecting steel moved to the music the two women, the dark beauty and the fair, the princess and the herdgirl. Evelyn led, and Audrey, following, knew that now indeed she was walking in a dream. From the throng of spectators burst a sudden storm of applause that was all for Mistress Evelyn Byrd.

A very few moments, and the measure was finished. A smile, a curtsy, a wave of Evelyn's hand, and the dancers, disbanding, left the floor. Mr. Corbin, Mr. Everard, and Mr. Travis, each had a word to say to Mr. Haward of Fair View, as they passed that gentleman.

Haward heard, and answered to the point; but when presently Evelyn said, "Let us go into the garden," and he found himself moving with her and with

Audrey through the buzzing, staring crowd toward the door of the Governor's house, he thought that it was into Fair View garden they were about to descend. And when they came out upon the broad, torchlit walk, and he saw gay parties of ladies and gentlemen straying here and there beneath the trees, he thought it strange that he had forgotten that he had guests this night. As for the sound of the river below his terrace, he had never heard so loud a murmur. It grew and filled the night, making thin and far away the voices of his guests.

There was a coach at the gates, and Mr. Grymes, who awhile ago had told him that he had a message to deliver, was at the coach door. Evelyn had her hand upon his arm, and her voice was speaking to him from as far away as across the river. "I am leaving the ball," it said, "and I will take the girl in my coach to the place where she is staying. Promise me that you will not go back to the house yonder; promise me that you will go away with Mr. Grymes, who is also weary of the ball" —

"Oh," said Mr. Grymes lightly, "Mr. Haward agrees with me that Marot's best room, cool and quiet, a bottle of Burgundy, and a hand at piquet are more alluring than the heat and babel we have left. We are going at once, Mistress Evelyn. Haward, I propose that on our way to Marot's we knock up Dr. Contesse, and make him free of our company."

As he spoke, he handed into the coach the lady in flowered damask, who had held up her head, but said no word, and the lady in rose-colored brocade, who, through the length of the ballroom and the hall and the broad walk where people passed and repassed, had kept her hand in Audrey's, and had talked, easily and with smiles, to the two attending gentlemen. He shut to the coach door, and drew back, with a low bow, when Haward's deeply flushed, handsome face appeared for a moment at the lowered glass.

"Art away to Westover, Evelyn?" he asked. "Then 'tis 'Good-by, sweetheart!' for I shall not go to Westover again. But you have a fair road to travel, — there are violets by the way-side; for it is May Day, you know, and the woods are white with dogwood and purple with the Judas tree. The violets are for you; but the great white blossoms, and the boughs of rosy mist, and all the trees that wave in the wind are for Audrey." His eyes passed the woman whom he would have wed, and rested upon her companion in the coach. "Thou fair dryad!" he said. "Two days hence we will keep tryst beneath the beech tree in the woods beyond the glebe house."

The man beside him put a hand upon his shoulder and plucked him back, nor would look at Evelyn's drawn and whitened face, but called to the coachman to go on. The black horses put themselves into motion, the equipage made a wide turn, and the lights of the Palace were left behind.

Evelyn lodged in a house upon the outskirts of the town, but from the Palace to Mistress Stagg's was hardly more than a stone's throw. Not until the coach was drawing near the small white house did either of the women speak. Then Audrey broke into an inarticulate murmur, and stooping would have pressed her cheek against the hand that had clasped hers only a little while before. But Evelyn snatched her hand away, and with a gesture of passionate repulsion shrank into her corner of the coach. "Oh, how dare you touch me!" she cried. "How dare you look at me, you serpent that have stung me so!" Able to endure no longer, she suddenly gave way to angry laughter. "Do you think I did it for you, — put such humiliation upon myself for you? Why, you wanton, I care not if you stand in white at every church door in Virginia! It was for him, for Mr. Marmaduke Haward of Fair View, for whose name and fame, if

he cares not for them himself, his friends have yet some care!" The coach stopped, and the footman opened the door. "Descend, if you please," went on Evelyn clearly and coldly. "You have had your triumph. I say not there is no excuse for him, — you are very beautiful. Good-night."

Audrey stood between the lilac bushes and watched the coach turn from Palace into Duke of Gloucester Street; then went and knocked at the green door. It was opened by Mistress Stagg in person, who drew her into the parlor, where the good-natured woman had been sitting all alone, and in increasing alarm as to what might be the outcome of this whim of Mr. Marmaduke Haward's. Now she was full of inquiries, ready to admire and to nod approval, or to shake her head and cry, "I told you so!" according to the turn of the girl's recital.

But Audrey had little to say, little to tell. Yes, oh yes, it had been a very grand sight. . . . Yes, Mr. Haward was kind; he had always been kind to her. . . . She had come home with Mistress Evelyn Byrd in her coach. . . . Might she go now to her room? She would fold the dress very carefully.

Mistress Stagg let her go, for indeed there was no purpose to be served in keeping her, seeing that the girl was clearly dazed; spoke without knowing what she said, and stood astare like one of Mrs. Salmon's beautiful wax ladies. She would hear all about it in the morning, when the child had slept off her excitement. They at the Palace could n't have taken her presence much amiss, or she would never in the world have come home in the Westover coach.

XXI.

AUDREY AWAKES.

There had lately come to Virginia, and to the convention of its clergy at Wil-

liamsburgh, one Mr. Eliot, a minister after the heart of a large number of sober and godly men whose reputation as a body suffered at the hands of Mr. Darden of Fair View parish, Mr. Bailey of Newport, Mr. Worden of Lawn's Creek, and a few kindred spirits. Certainly Mr. Eliot was not like these; so erect, indeed, did he hold himself in the strait and narrow path that his most admiring brethren, being, as became good Virginians, somewhat easy-going in their saintliness, were inclined to think that he leaned too far the other way. It was commendable to hate sin and reprove the sinner; but when it came to raining condemnation upon horse racing, dancing, Cato at the playhouse, and like innocent diversions, Mr. Eliot was surely somewhat out of bounds. The most part accounted for his turn of mind by the fact that ere he came to Virginia he had been a sojourner in New England.

He was mighty in the pulpit, was Mr. Eliot; no droning reader of last year's sermons, but a thunderer forth of speech that was now acrid, now fiery, but that always came from an impassioned nature, vehement for the damnation of those whom God so strangely spared. When, as had perforce happened during the past week, he must sit with his brethren in the congregation and listen to lukewarm — nay, to dead and cold adjurations and expoundings, his very soul itched to mount the pulpit stairs, thrust down the Laodicean that chanced to occupy it, and himself awaken as with the sound of a trumpet this people who slept upon the verge of a precipice, between hell that gaped below and God who sat on high, serenely regardful of his creatures' plight. Though so short a time in Virginia, he was already become a man of note, the prophet not without honor, whom it was the fashion to admire, if not to follow. It was therefore natural enough that the Commissary, himself a man of plain speech

from the pulpit, should appoint him to preach in Bruton church this Sunday morning, before his Excellency the Governor, the worshipful the Council, the clergy in convention, and as much of Williamsburgh, gentle and simple, as could crowd into the church. Mr. Eliot took the compliment as an answer to prayer, and chose for his text Daniel fifth and twenty-seventh.

Lodging as he did on Palace Street, the early hours of the past night, which he would have given to prayer and meditation, had been profaned by strains of music from the Governor's house, by laughter and swearing and much going to and fro in the street beneath his window. These disturbances filling him with righteous wrath, he came down to his breakfast next morning prepared to give his hostess, who kept him company at table, line and verse which should demonstrate that Jehovah shared his anger.

"Ay, sir!" she cried. "And if that were all, sir" — and like water from a bottle out came a colored narration of the occurrence at the Governor's ball. This was followed by a wonderfully circumstantial account of Mr. Marmaduke Haward's sins of omission against old and new acquaintances who would have entertained him at their houses, and been entertained in turn at Fair View, and by as detailed a description of the toils that had been laid for him by that audacious piece who had forced herself upon the company last night.

Mr. Eliot listened aghast, and mentally emended his sermon. If he knew Virginia, even so flagrant a case as this might never come before a vestry. Should this woman go unreprieved? When in due time he was in the church, and the congregation was gathering, he beckoned to him one of the sidesmen, asked a question, and when it was answered looked fixedly at a dark girl sitting far away in a pew beneath the gallery.

It was a fine, sunny morning, with a

tang of autumn in the air, and the concourse within the church was very great. The clergy showed like a wedge of black driven into the bright colors with which nave and transept overflowed. His Excellency the Governor sat in state, with the Council on either hand. One member of that body was not present. Well-nigh all Williamsburgh knew by now that Mr. Marmaduke Haward lay at Marot's ordinary ill of a raging fever. Hooped petticoat and fragrant bodice found reason for whispering to laced coat and periwig; significant glances traveled from every quarter of the building toward the tall pew where, collected but somewhat palely smiling, sat Mistress Evelyn Byrd beside her father. All this was before or during the service. When the minister of the day mounted the pulpit, and, gaunt against the great black sounding-board, gave out his text in a solemn and ringing voice, such was the genuine power of the man that every face was turned toward him, and throughout the building there fell a sudden hush.

Audrey looked with the rest, but she could not have said that she listened; — not at first. She was there because she always went to church on Sunday. It had not occurred to her to ask that she might stay at home. She had come from her room that morning with the same still face, the same strained and startled look about the eyes, that she had carried to it the night before. Black Peggy, who found her bed unslept in, thought that she must have sat the night through beside the window. Mistress Stagg, meeting her at the stairfoot with the tidings (just gathered from the lips of a passer-by) of Mr. Haward's illness, thought that the girl took the news very quietly. She made no exclamation, said nothing good or bad; only drew her hand across her brow and eyes, as though she strove to thrust away a veil or mist that troubled her. This gesture she repeated now and again during the hour before church time.

Mistress Stagg heard no more of the ball this morning than she had heard the night before. Something ailed the girl. She was not sullen, but she could not or would not talk. Perhaps, despite the fact of the Westover coach, she had not been kindly used at the Palace. The exactress pursed her lips, and confided to her Mirabell that times were not what they once were. Had she not, at Bath, been given a ticket to the Saturday ball by my Lord Squander himself? Ay, and she had footed it, too, in the country dance, with the best of them, with captains and French counts and gentlemen and ladies of title, — ay, and had gone down the middle with the very pattern of Sir Harry Wildair! To be sure, no one had ever breathed a word against her character; but, for her part, she believed no great harm of Audrey, either. Look at the girl's eyes, now: they were like a child's or a saint's.

Mirabell nodded and looked wise, but said nothing.

When the church bells rang Audrey was ready, and she walked to church with Mistress Stagg much as, the night before, she had walked between the lilacs to the green door when the Westover coach had passed from her sight. Now she sat in the church much as she had sat at the window the night through. She did not know that people had looked at her; nor had she caught the venomous glance of Mistress Deborah, already in the pew, and aware of more than had come to her friend's ears.

Audrey was not listening, was scarcely thinking. Her hands were crossed in her lap, and now and then she raised one and made the motion of pushing aside from her eyes something heavy that clung and blinded. What part of her spirit that was not wholly darkened and folded within itself was back in the mountains of her childhood, with those of her own blood whom she had loved and lost. What use to try to understand to-day, — to-day with its falling skies, its

bewildered pondering over the words that were said to her last night? And the morrow, — she must leave that. Perhaps when it should dawn he would come to her, and call her "little maid," and laugh at her dreadful dream. But now, while it was to-day, she could not think of him without an agony of pain and bewilderment. He was ill, too, and suffering. Oh, she must leave the thought of him alone! Back then to the long yesterdays she traveled, and played quietly, dreamily, with Robin on the green grass beside the shining stream, or sat on the doorstep, her head on Molly's lap, and watched the evening star behind the Endless Mountains.

It was very quiet in the church save for that one great voice speaking. Little by little the voice impressed itself upon her consciousness. The eyes of her mind were upon long ranges of mountains distinct against the splendor of a sunset sky. Last seen in childhood, viewed now through the illusion of the years, the mountains were vastly higher than nature had planned them; the streamers of light shot to the zenith; the black forests were still; everywhere a fixed glory, a gigantic silence, a holding of the breath for things to happen.

By degrees the voice in her ears fitted in with the landscape, became, so solemn and ringing it was, like the voice of the archangel of that sunset land. Audrey listened at last; and suddenly the mountains were gone, and the light from the sky, and her people were dead and dust away in that hidden valley, and she was sitting in the church at Williamsburgh, alone, without a friend.

What was the preacher saying? What ball of the night before was he describing with bitter power, the while he gave warning of handwriting upon the wall such as had menaced Belshazzar's feast of old? Of what shameless girl was he telling, — what creature dressed in silks that should have gone in rags, brought to that ball by her paramour —

The gaunt figure in the pulpit trembled like a leaf with the passion of the preacher's convictions and the energy of his utterance. On had gone the stream of rhetoric, the denunciations, the satire, the tremendous assertions of God's mind and purposes. The lash that was wielded was far-reaching; all the vices of the age — irreligion, blasphemy, drunkenness, extravagance, vainglory, loose living — fell under its sting. The condemnation was general, and each man looked to see his neighbor wince. The occurrence at the ball last night, — he was on that for final theme, was he? There was a slight movement throughout the congregation. Some glanced to where would have sat Mr. Marmaduke Haward, had not the gentleman been at present in his bed, raving now of a great run of luck at the Cocoa Tree; now of an Indian who, with his knee upon his breast, was throttling him to death. Others looked over their shoulders to see if that gypsy yet sat beneath the gallery. Colonel Byrd took out his snuffbox and studied the picture on the lid, while his daughter sat like a carven lady, with a slight smile upon her lips.

On went the word picture that showed how vice could flaunt it in so fallen an age. The preacher spared not plain words, squarely turned himself toward the gallery, pointed out with voice and hand the object of his censure and of God's wrath. Had the law pilloried the girl before them all, it had been but little worse for her. She sat like a statue, staring with wide eyes at the window above the altar. This, then, was what the words in the coach last night had meant — this was what the princess thought — this was what his world thought —

There arose a commotion in the ranks of the clergy of Virginia. The Rev. Gideon Darden, quitting with an oath the company of his brethren, came down the aisle, and, pushing past his wife, took his stand in the pew beside the orphan who had lived beneath his roof, whom during

many years he had cursed upon occasion and sometimes struck, and whom he had latterly made his tool. "Never mind him, Audrey, my girl," he said, and put an unsteady hand upon her shoulder. "You're a good child; they cannot harm ye."

He turned his great shambling body and heavy face toward the preacher, stemmed in the full tide of his eloquence by this unseemly interruption. "Ye beggarly Scot!" he exclaimed thickly. "Ye evil-thinking saint from Salem way, that know the very lining of the Lord's mind, and yet, walking through his earth, see but a poisonous weed in his every harmless flower! Shame on you to beat down the flower that never did you harm! The girl's as innocent a thing as lives! Ay, I've had my dram, — the more shame to you that are justly rebuked out of the mouth of a drunken man! I have done, Mr. Commissary," addressing himself to that dignitary, who had advanced to the altar rail with his arm raised in a command for silence. "I've no child of my own, thank God! but the maid has grown up in my house, and I'll not sit to hear her belied. I've heard of last night: 't was the mad whim of a sick man. The girl's as guiltless of wrong as any lady here. I, Gideon Darden, vouch for it!"

He sat heavily down beside Audrey, who never stirred from her still regard of that high window. There was a moment of portentous silence; then, "Let us pray," said the minister from the pulpit.

Audrey knelt with the rest, but she did not pray. And when it was all over, and the benediction had been given, and she found herself without the church, she looked at the green trees against the clear autumnal skies and at the graves in the churchyard as though it were a new world into which she had stepped. She could not have said that she found it fair. Her place had been so near the door that well-nigh all the congregation

was behind her, streaming out of the church, eager to reach the open air, where it might discuss the sermon, the futile and scandalous interruption by the notorious Mr. Darden, and what Mr. Marmaduke Haward might have said or done had he been present.

Only Mistress Staggs kept beside her; for Mistress Deborah hung back, unwilling to be seen in her company, and Darden, from that momentary awakening of his better nature, had sunk to himself again, and thought not how else he might aid this wounded member of his household. But Mistress Mary Staggs was a kindly soul, whose heart had led her comfortably through life with very little appeal to her head. The two or three young women — Oldfields and Porters of the Virginian stage — who were under indentures to her husband and herself found her as much their friend as mistress. Their triumphs in the petty playhouse of this town of a thousand souls were hers, and what woes they had came quickly to her ears. Now she would have slipped her hand into Audrey's and have given garrulous comfort, as the two passed alone through the churchyard gate and took their way up Palace Street toward the small white house. But Audrey gave not her hand, did not answer, made no moan, neither justified herself nor blamed another. She did not speak at all, but after the first glance about her moved like a sleep-walker.

When the house was reached she went up to the bedroom. Mistress Deborah, entering stormily ten minutes later, found herself face to face with a strange Audrey, who, standing in the middle of the floor, raised her hand for silence in a gesture so commanding that the virago stayed her tirade, and stood open-mouthed.

"I wish to speak," said the new Audrey. "I was waiting for you. There's a question I wish to ask, and I'll ask it of you who were never kind to me."

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"Never kind to her!" cried the minister's wife to the four walls. "And she's been taught, and pampered, and treated more like a daughter than the beggar wench she is! And this is my return, — to sit by her in church to-day, and have all Virginia think her belonging to me" —

"I belong to no one," said Audrey. "Even God does not want me. Be quiet until I have done." She made again the gesture of pushing aside from face and eyes the mist that clung and blinded. "I know now what they say," she went on. "The preacher told me awhile ago. Last night a lady spoke to me: now I know what was her meaning. Because Mr. Haward, who saved my life, who brought me from the mountains, who left me, when he sailed away, where he thought I would be happy, was kind to me when he came again after so many years; because he has often been to the glebe house, and I to Fair View; because last night he would have me go with him to the Governor's ball, they think — they say out loud for all the people to hear — that I — that I am like Joan, who was whipped last month at the Court House. But it is not of the lies they tell that I wish to speak."

Her hand went again to her forehead, then dropped at her side. A look of fear and of piteous appeal came into her face. "The witch said that I dreamed, and that it was not well for dreamers to awaken." Suddenly the quiet of her voice and bearing was broken. With a cry, she hurried across the room, and, kneeling, caught at the other's gown. "Ah! that is no dream, is it? No dream that he is my friend, only my friend who has always been sorry for me, has always helped me! He is the noblest gentleman, the truest, the best — he loves the lady at Westover — they are to be married — he never knew what people were saying — he was not himself when he spoke to me so last night" —

Her eyes appealed to the face above her.

"I could never have dreamed all this," she said. "Tell me that I was awake."

The minister's wife looked down upon her with a bitter smile. "So you've had your fool's paradise? Well, once I had mine, though 't was not your kind. 'T is a pretty country, Audrey, but it's not long before they turn you out." She laughed somewhat drearily, then in a moment turned shrew again. "He never knew what people were saying?" she cried. "You little fool, do you suppose he cared? 'T was you that played your cards all wrong with your Governor's ball last night! — setting up for a lady, forsooth! — bringing all the town about your ears! You might have known that he would never have taken you there in his senses. At Fair View things went very well. He was entertained, — and I meant to see that no harm came of it, — and Darden got his support in the vestry. For he was bit, — there's no doubt of that, — though what he ever saw in you more than big eyes and a brown skin, the Lord knows, not I! Only your friend! — a fine gentleman just from London, with a whole Canterbury book of stories about his life there, to spend a'most a summer on the road between his plantation and a wretched glebe house because he was only your friend, and had saved you from the Indians when you were a child, and wished to be kind to you still! I'll tell you who did wish to be kind to you, and that's Jean Hugon, the trader, who wanted to marry you."

Audrey rose to her feet, and moved slowly backward to the wall. Mistress Deborah went shrilly on: "I dare swear you believe that Mr. Haward had you in mind all the years he was gone from Virginia? Well, he did n't. He puts you with Darden and me, and he says, 'There's the strip of Orenoko down by the swamp, — I've told my agent that you're to have from it so many pounds a year;' and he sails away to London and all the fine things there, and never thinks

of you more until he comes back to Virginia and sees you last May Day at Jamestown. Next morning he comes riding to the glebe house. 'And so,' he says to Darden, 'and so my little maid that I brought for trophy out of the Appalachian Mountains is a woman grown? Faith, I'd quite forgot the child; but Saunderson tells me that you have not forgot to draw upon my Orenoko.' That's all the remembrance you were held in, Audrey."

She paused to take breath, and to look with shrewish triumph at the girl who leaned against the wall. "I like not waking up," said Audrey as to herself. "It were easier to die. Perhaps I am dying."

"And then out he walks to find and talk to you, and in sets your pretty summer of all play and no work!" went on the other, in a high voice. "Oh, there was kindness enough, once you had caught his fancy! I wonder if the lady at Westover praised his kindness? They say she is a proud young lady: I wonder if she liked your being at the ball last night? When she comes to Fair View, I'll take my oath that you'll walk no more in its garden! But perhaps she won't come now, — though her maid Chloe told Mistress Bray's Martha that she certainly loves him" —

"I would I were dead," said Audrey. "I would I were dead, like Molly." She stood up straight against the wall, and pushed her heavy hair from her forehead. "Be quiet now," she said. "You see that I am awake; there is no need for further calling. I shall not dream again." She looked at the older woman doubtfully. "Would you mind," she suggested, — "would you be so very kind as to leave me alone, to sit here awake for a while? I have to get used to it, you know. To-morrow, when we go back to the glebe house, I will work the harder. It must be easy to work when one is awake. Dreaming takes so much time."

Mistress Deborah could hardly have

told why she did as she was asked. Perhaps the very strangeness of the girl made her uncomfortable in her presence; perhaps in her sour and withered heart there was yet some little soundness of pity and comprehension; or perhaps it was only that she had said her say, and was anxious to get to her friends below, and shake from her soul the dust of any possible complicity with circumstance in moulding the destinies of Darden's Audrey. Be that as it may, when she had flung her hood upon the bed and had looked at herself in the cracked glass above the dresser, she went out of the room, and closed the door somewhat softly behind her.

XXII.

BY THE RIVERSIDE.

"Yea, I am glad — I and my father and mother and Ephraim — that thee is returned to Fair View," answered Truelove. "And has thee truly no shoes of plain and sober stuffs? These be much too gaudy."

"There's a pair of black callimanco," said the storekeeper reluctantly; "but these of flowered silk would so become your feet, or this red-heeled pair with the buckles, or this of fine morocco. Did you think of me every day that I spent in Williamsburgh?"

"I prayed for thee every day," said Truelove simply. — "for thee and for the sick man who had called thee to his side. Let me see thy callimanco shoes. Thee knows that I may not wear these others."

The storekeeper brought the plainest footgear that his stock afforded. "They are of a very small size, — perhaps too small. Had you not better try them ere you buy? I could get a larger pair from Mr. Carter's store."

Truelove seated herself upon a convenient stool, and lifted her gray skirt

an inch above a slender ankle. "Perchance they may not be too small," she said, and in despite of her training and the whiteness of her soul two dimples made their appearance above the corners of her pretty mouth. MacLean knelt to remove the worn shoe, but found in the shoe strings an obstinate knot. The two had the store to themselves; for Ephraim waited for his sister at the landing, rocking in his boat on the bosom of the river, watching a flight of wild geese drawn like a snowy streamer across the dark blue sky. It was late autumn, and the forest was dressed in flame color.

"Thy fingers move so slowly that I fear thee is not well," said Truelove kindly. "They that have nursed men with fever do often fall ill themselves. Will thee not see a physician?"

MacLean, sanguine enough in hue, and no more gaunt of body than usual, worked languidly on. "I trust no lowland physician," he said. "In my own country, if I had need, I would send to the foot of Dun-da-gu for black Murdoch, whose fathers have been physicians to the MacLeans of Duart since the days of Galethus. The little man in this parish, — his father was a lawyer, his grandfather a merchant; he knows not what was his great-grandfather! There, the shoe is untied! If I came every day to your father's house, and if your mother gave me to drink of her elder-flower wine, and if I might sit on the sunny doorstep and watch you at your spinning, I should, I think, recover."

He slipped upon her foot the shoe of black cloth. Truelove regarded it gravely. "'T is not too small, after all," she said. "And does thee not think it more comely than these other, with their silly pomp of colored heels and blossoms woven in the silk?" She indicated with her glance the vainglorious row upon the bench beside her; then looked down at the little foot in its sombre covering and sighed.

"I think that thy foot would be fair

in the shoe of Donald Ross!" cried the storekeeper, and kissed the member which he praised.

Truelove drew back, her cheeks very pink, and the dimples quite uncertain whether to go or stay. "Thee is idle in thy behavior," she said severely. "I do think that thee is of the generation that will not learn. I pray thee to expeditiously put back my own shoe, and to give me in a parcel the callimanco pair."

MacLean set himself to obey, though with the expedition of a tortoise. Crisp autumn air and vivid sunshine pouring in at window and door filled and lit the store. The doorway framed a picture of blue sky, slow-moving water, and ragged landing; the window gave upon crimson sumac and the gold of a sycamore. Truelove, in her gray gown and close white cap, sat in the midst of the bouquet of colors afforded by the motley lining of the Fair View store, and gazed through the window at the riotous glory of this world. At last she looked at MacLean. "When, a year ago, thee was put to mind this store, and I, coming here to buy, made thy acquaintance," she said softly, "thee wore always so stern and sorrowful a look that my heart bled for thee. I knew that thee was unhappy. Is thee unhappy still?"

MacLean tied the shoe strings with elaborate care; then rose from his knees, and stood looking down from his great height upon the Quaker maiden. His face was softened, and when he spoke it was with a gentle voice. "No," he said, "I am not unhappy as at first I was. My king is an exile, and my chief is forfeited. I suppose that my father is dead. Ewin Mackinnon, my foe upon whom I swore revenge, lived untroubled by me, and died at another's hands. My country is closed against me; I shall never see it more. I am named a rebel, and chained to this soil, this dull and sluggish land, where from year's end to year's end the key keeps the house and the furze bush keeps the cow. The best years of

my manhood — years in which I should have acquired honor — have gone from me here. There was a man of my name amongst those gentlemen, old officers of Dundee, who in France did not disdain to serve as private sentinels, that their maintenance might not burden a king as unfortunate as themselves. That MacLean fell in the taking of an island in the Rhine which to this day is called the Island of the Scots, so bravely did these gentlemen bear themselves. They made their lowly station honorable; marshals and princes applauded their deeds. The man of my name was unfortunate, but not degraded; his life was not amiss, and his death was glorious. But I, Angus MacLean, son and brother of chieftains, I serve as a slave; giving obedience where in nature it is not due, laboring in an alien land for that which profiteth not, looking to die peacefully in my bed! I should be no less than most unhappy."

He sat down upon the bench beside Truelove, and taking the hem of her apron began to plait it between his fingers. "But to-day," he said, — "but to-day the sky seems blue, the sunshine bright. Why is that, Truelove?"

Truelove, with her eyes cast down and a deeper wild rose in her cheeks, opined that it was because Friend Marmaduke Haward was well of his fever, and had that day returned to Fair View. "Friend Lewis Contesse did tell my father, when he was in Williamsburgh, that thee made a tenderer nurse than any woman, and that he did think that Marmaduke Haward owed his life to thee. I am glad that thee has made friends with him whom men foolishly call thy master."

"Credit to that the blue sky," said the storekeeper whimsically; "there is yet the sunshine to be accounted for. This room did not look so bright half an hour syne."

But Truelove shook her head, and would not reckon further; instead heard

Ephraim calling, and gently drew her apron from the Highlander's clasp. "There will be a meeting of Friends at our house next fourth day," she said, in her most dovelike tones, as she rose and held out her hand for her new shoes. "Will thee come, Angus? Thee will be edified, for Friend Sarah Story, who hath the gift of prophecy, will be there, and we do think to hear of great things. Thee will come?"

"By St. Kattan, that will I!" exclaimed the storekeeper, with suspicious readiness. "The meeting lasts not long, does it? When the Friends are gone there will be reward? I mean I may sit on the doorstep and watch you—and watch *thee*—spin?"

Truelove dimpled once more, took her shoes, and would have gone her way sedately and alone, but MacLean must needs keep her company to the end of the landing and the waiting Ephraim. The latter, as he rowed away from the Fair View store, remarked upon his sister's looks: "What makes thy cheeks so pink, Truelove, and thy eyes so big and soft?"

Truelove did not know; thought that mayhap 't was the sunshine and the blowing wind.

The sun still shone, but the wind had fallen, when, two hours later, MacLean pocketed the key of the store, betook himself again to the water's edge, and entering a small boat, first turned it sunwise for luck's sake, then rowed slowly downstream to the great-house landing. Here he found a handful of negroes—boatmen and house servants—basking in the sunlight. Juba was of the number, and at MacLean's call scrambled to his feet and came to the head of the steps. "No, sah, Marse Duke not on de place. He order Mirza an' ride off"—a pause—"an' ride off to de glebe house. Yes, sah, I done tol' him he ought to rest. Goin' to wait tel he come back?"

"No," answered MacLean, with a

darkened face. "Tell him I will come to the great house to-night."

In effect, the storekeeper was now, upon Fair View plantation, master of his own time and person. Therefore, when he left the landing, he did not row back to the store, but, it being pleasant upon the water, kept on downstream, gliding beneath the drooping branches of red and russet and gold. When he came to the mouth of the little creek that ran past Haward's garden, he rested upon his oars, and with a frowning face looked up its silver reaches.

The sun was near its setting, and a still and tranquil light lay upon the water that was glassy smooth. Rowing close to the bank, the Highlander saw through the gold fretwork of the leaves above him far spaces of pale blue sky. All was quiet, windless, listlessly fair. A few birds were on the wing, and far toward the opposite shore an idle sail seemed scarce to hold its way. Presently the trees gave place to a grassy shore, rimmed by a fiery vine that strove to cool its leaves in the flood below. Behind it was a little rise of earth, a green hillock, fresh and vernal in the midst of the flame-colored autumn. In shape it was like those hills in his native land which the Highlander knew to be tenanted by the *daoine shì*, the men of peace. There, in glittering chambers beneath the earth, they dwelt, a potent, eerie, gossamer folk, and thence, men and women, they issued at times to deal balefully with the mortal race.

A woman was seated upon the hillock, quiet as a shadow, her head resting on her hand, her eyes upon the river. Dark-haired, dark-eyed, slight of figure, and utterly, mournfully still, sitting alone in the fading light, with the northern sky behind her, for the moment she wore to the Highlander an aspect not of earth, and he was startled. Then he saw that it was but Darden's Audrey. She watched the water where it gleamed far off, and did not see him in his boat below the

scarlet vines. Nor when, after a moment's hesitation, he fastened the boat to a cedar stump, and stepped ashore, did she pay any heed. It was not until he spoke to her, standing where he could have touched her with his outstretched hand, that she moved or looked his way.

"How long since you left the glebe house?" he demanded abruptly.

"The sun was high," she answered, in a slow, even voice, with no sign of surprise at finding herself no longer alone. "I have been sitting here for a long time. I thought that Hugon might be coming this afternoon. . . . There is no use in hiding, but I thought if I stole down here he might not find me very soon."

Her voice died away, and she looked again at the water. The storekeeper sat down upon the bank, between the hillock and the fiery vine, and his keen eyes watched her closely. "The river," she said at last, — "I like to watch it. There was a time when I loved the woods, but now I see that they are ugly. Now, when I can steal away, I come to the river always. I watch it and watch it, and think. . . . All that you give it is taken so surely, and hurried away, and buried out of sight forever. A little while ago I pulled a spray of farewell summer, and went down there where the bank shelves and gave it to the river. It was gone in a moment for all that the stream seems so stealthy and slow."

"The stream comes from afar," said the Highlander. "In the west, beneath the sun, it may be a torrent flashing through the mountains."

"The mountains!" cried Audrey. "Ah, they are uglier than the woods, — black and terrible! Once I loved them, too, but that was long ago." She put her chin upon her hand, and again studied the river. "Long ago," she said, beneath her breath.

There was a silence; then, "Mr. Haward is at Fair View again," announced the storekeeper.

The girl's face twitched.

"He has been nigh to death," went on her informant. "There were days when I looked for no morrow for him; one night when I held above his lips a mirror, and hardly thought to see the breath-stain."

Audrey laughed. "He can fool even Death, can he not?" The laugh was light and mocking, a tinkling, elvish sound which the Highlander frowned to hear. A book, worn and dog-eared, lay near her on the grass. He took it up and turned the leaves; then put it by, and glanced uneasily at the slender, brown-clad form seated upon the fairy mound.

"That is strange reading," he said.

Audrey looked at the book listlessly. "The schoolmaster gave it to me. It tells of things as they are, all stripped of make-believe, and shows how men love only themselves, and how ugly and mean is the world when we look at it aright. The schoolmaster says that to look at it aright you must not dream; you must stay awake," — she drew her hand across her brow and eyes, — "you must stay awake."

"I had rather dream," said MacLean shortly. "I have no love for your schoolmaster."

"He is a wise man," she answered. "Now that I do not like the woods I listen to him when he comes to the glebe house. If I remember all he says, maybe I shall grow wise, also, and the pain will stop." Once more she dropped her chin upon her hand and fell to brooding, her eyes upon the river. When she spoke again it was to herself: "Sometimes of nights I hear it calling me. Last night, while I knelt by my window, it called so loud that I put my hands over my ears; but I could not keep out the sound, — the sound of the river that comes from the mountains, that goes to the sea. And then I saw that there was a light in Fair View house."

Her voice ceased, and the silence closed in around them. The sun was

setting, and in the west were purple islands merging into a sea of gold. The river, too, was colored, and every tree was like a torch burning stilly in the quiet of the evening. For some time MacLean watched the girl, who now again seemed unconscious of his presence; but at last he got to his feet, and looked toward his boat. "I must be going," he said; then, as Audrey raised her head and the light struck upon her face, he continued more kindly than one would think so stern a seeming man could speak: "I am sorry for you, my maid. God knows that I should know how dreadful are the wounds of the spirit! Should you need a friend" —

Audrey shook her head. "No more friends," she said, and laughed as she had laughed before. "They belong in dreams. When you are awake, — that is a different thing."

The storekeeper went his way, back to the Fair View store, rowing slowly, with a grim and troubled face, while Darden's Audrey sat still upon the green hillock and watched the darkening river. Behind her, at no great distance, was the glebe house: more than once she thought she heard Hugon coming through the bushes and calling her by name. The river darkened more and more, and in the west the sea of gold changed to plains of amethyst and opal. There was a crescent moon, and Audrey, looking at it with eyes that ached for the tears that would not gather, knew that once she would have found it fair.

Hugon was coming, for she heard the twigs upon the path from the glebe house snap beneath his tread. She did not turn or move; she would see him soon enough, hear him soon enough. Presently his black eyes would look into hers; it would be bird and snake over again, and the bird was tired of fluttering. The bird was so tired that when a hand was laid on her shoulder she did not writhe herself from under its touch; instead only shuddered slightly, and

stared with wide eyes at the flowing river. But the hand was white, with a gleaming ring upon its forefinger, and it stole down to clasp her own. "Audrey," said a voice that was not Hugon's.

The girl flung back her head, saw Haward's face bending over her, and with a loud cry sprang to her feet. When he would have touched her again she recoiled, putting between them a space of green grass. "I have hunted you for an hour," he began. "At last I struck this path. Audrey" —

Audrey's hands went to her ears. Step by step she moved backward, until she stood against the trunk of a blood-red oak. When she saw that Haward followed her she uttered a terrified scream. At the sound and at the sight of her face he stopped short, and his outstretched hand fell to his side. "Why, Audrey, Audrey!" he exclaimed. "I would not hurt you, child. I am not Jean Hugon!"

The narrow path down which he had come was visible for some distance as it wound through field and copse, and upon it there now appeared another figure, as yet far off, but moving rapidly through the fading light toward the river. "Jean! Jean! Jean Hugon!" cried Audrey.

The blood rushed to Haward's face. "As bad as that!" he said, beneath his breath. Going over to the girl, he took her by the hands and strove to make her look at him; but her face was like marble, and her eyes would not meet his, and in a moment she had wrenched herself free of his clasp. "Jean Hugon! Help, Jean Hugon!" she called.

The half-breed in the distance heard her voice, and began to run toward them.

"Audrey, listen to me!" cried Haward. "How can I speak to you, how explain, how entreat, when you are like this? Child, child, I am no monster! Why do you shrink from me thus, look at me thus with frightened eyes? You know that I love you!"

She broke from him with lifted hands

and a wailing cry. "Let me go! Let me go! I am running through the corn, in the darkness, and I hope to meet the Indians! I am awake, — oh, God! I am wide awake!"

With another cry, and with her hands shutting out the sound of his voice, she turned and fled toward the approaching trader. Haward, after one deep oath and an impetuous, quickly checked movement to follow the flying figure, stood beneath the oak and watched that meeting: Hugon, in his wine-colored coat and Blenheim wig, fierce, inquisitive, bragging of what he might do; the girl suddenly listless, silent, set only upon an immediate return through the fields to the glebe house.

She carried her point, and the two

went away without let or hindrance from the master of Fair View, who leaned against the stem of the oak and watched them go. He had been very ill, and the hour's search, together with this unwonted beating of his heart, had made him desperately weary, — too weary to do aught but go slowly and without overmuch of thought to the spot where he had left his horse, mount it, and ride as slowly homeward. To-morrow, he told himself, he would manage differently; at least, she should be made to hear him. In the meantime there was the night to be gotten through. MacLean, he remembered, was coming to the great house. What with wine and cards, thought might for a time be pushed out of doors.

Mary Johnston.

(To be continued.)

RECOLLECTIONS OF NOVEMBER.

IN the green country it is often hard to say, unprejudiced, what the season is; and if a revenant noted such things, he would find that many days belied the calendar. Indeed, on first going afield after a long imprisonment by illness, I have detected autumnal savors in a stagnant February day, and mistaken the bravery of October for the nuptial splendor of the spring. Seen afar off, the poplars seem to be on fire with blossoms instead of dying foliage in September. In April the young creeper leaves have a look of autumn in their bronzed luxuriance. I have known many a beaming day with "June in her eyes," as Thomas Carew says, —

"June in her eyes, in her heart January," —

with a drear wind that kills the budding roses. But in my suburban street every season, almost every month, is marked

as it were in heavy black letter at its entrance. Nature here uses a brief language, like the hand at Belshazzar's feast, and I know that it is November by the dull, sad trampling of the hooves and feet; by that testy wind among the chimneys (the mere *body* of the wind; its *soul* it left among the hills); by the light, as of an unsnuffed candle, of the sun, that scarcely at midday surmounts the tallest housetops; by the barren morning twilight, broken by no jolly sound of boys whistling or ballad-singing on their errands. The fire should rightly grow pale toward noon, and I detest its continual brightness, which cannot check a shudder as I read the lines on November by a Welsh poet of four or five centuries back. In his Novembers pigs became fat and men dreamed of Christmas. The minstrels began to appear, making a second spring.