

# AN OPEN-EYED CONSPIRACY:

AN IDYL OF SARATOGA.

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WITH PICTURES BY IRVING R. WILES.



DRAWN BY IRVING R. WILES.

ENGRAVED BY PETER AITKEN.

IN THE HOUSE OF PANSA.

X.

WE had undertaken rather a queer affair, but it was not so queer after all, when Miss Gage was fairly settled with us. There were other young girls in that pleasant house who had only one another's protection and the general safety of the social atmosphere. We

could not conceal from ourselves, of course, that we had done rather a romantic thing, and in the light of Europe, which we had more or less upon our actions, rather an absurd thing; but it was a comfort to find that Miss Gage thought it neither romantic nor absurd. She took the affair with an apparent ignorance of anything unusual in it—with so much ignorance, indeed, that Mrs. March had her occasional question whether she was duly impressed with what was being done for her. Whether this was so or not, it is certain that she was as docile and as biddable as need be. She did not always ask what she should do; that would not have been in the tradition of village independence; but she always did what she was told, and did not vary from her instructions a hair's breadth. I do not suppose she always knew why she might do this and might not do that; and I do not suppose that young girls often understand the reasons of the proprieties. They are told that they must, and that they must not, and this in an astonishing degree suffices them if they are nice girls.

Of course there was pretty constant question of Kendricks in the management of Miss Gage's amusement, for that was really what our enterprise resolved itself into. He showed from the first the sweetest disposition to forward all our plans in regard to her, and, in fact, he even anticipated our wishes. I do not mean to give the notion that he behaved

from an interested motive in going to the station the morning Mrs. Deering left, and getting her ticket for her, and checking her baggage, and posting her in the changes she would have to make. This was something I ought to have thought of myself, but I did not think of it, and I am willing that he should have all the credit. I know that he did it out of the lovely generosity of nature which always took me in him. Miss Gage was there with her, and she remained to be consoled after Mrs. Deering departed. They came straight to us from the train, and then, when he had consigned Miss Gage to Mrs. March's care, he offered to go and see that her things were transferred from her hotel to ours; they were all ready, she said, and the bill was paid.

He did not come back that day, and, in fact, he delicately waited for some sign from us that his help was wanted. But when he did come he had formulated Saratoga very completely, and had a better conception of doing it than I had, after my repeated sojourns.

We went very early in our explorations to the House of Pansa, which you find in very much better repair at Saratoga than you do at Pompeii, and we contrived to pass a whole afternoon there. My wife and I had been there before more than once; but it always pleasantly recalled our wander-years, when we first met in Europe, and we suffered round after those young things with a patience which I hope will not be forgotten at the Day of Judgment. When we came to a seat we sat down, and let them go off by themselves; but my recollection is that there is not much furniture in the House of Pansa that you can sit down on, and for the most part we all kept together.

Kendricks and I thought alike about the Pompeiian house as a model of something that might be done in the way of a seaside cottage in our own country, and we talked up a little paper that might be done for «Every Other Week,» with pretty architectural drawings, giving an account of our imaginary realization of the notion.

«Have somebody,» he said, «visit people who had been boring him to come down, or up, or out, and see them, and find them in a Pompeiian house, with the sea in front and a blue-green grove of low pines behind. Might have a thread of story, but mostly talk about how they came to do it, and how delightfully livable they found it. You could work it up with some architect, who would help you to keep off the grass in the way of technical blunders. With all this tendency to the

classic in public architecture, I don't see why the Pompeiian villa should n't be the next word for summer cottage.»

«Well, we'll see what Fulkerson says. He may see an ad. in it. Would you like to do it?»

«Why not do it yourself? Nobody else could do it so well.»

«Thanks for the taffy; but the idea was yours.»

«I'll do it,» said Kendricks, after a moment, «if you won't.»

«We'll see.»

Miss Gage stared, and Mrs. March said:

«I did n't suppose the House of Pansa would lead to shop with you two.»

«You never can tell which way copy lies,» I returned; and I asked the girl, «What should *you* think, Miss Gage, of a little paper with a thread of story, but mostly talk, on a supposititious Pompeiian cottage?»

«I don't believe I understand,» said she, far too remote from our literary interests, as I saw, to be ashamed of her ignorance.

«There!» I said to Kendricks. «Do you think the general public would?»

«Miss Gage is n't the general public,» said my wife, who had followed the course of my thought; her tone implied that Miss Gage was wiser and better.

«Would you allow yourself to be drawn,» I asked, «dreamily issuing from an aisle of the pine grove as the tutelary goddess of a Pompeiian cottage?»

The girl cast a bewildered glance at my wife, who said: «You need n't pay any attention to him, Miss Gage. He has an idea that he is making a joke.»

We felt that we had done enough for one afternoon, when we had done the House of Pansa, and I proposed that we should go and sit down in Congress Park and listen to the Troy band. I was not without the hope that it would play «Washington Post.»

My wife contrived that we should fall in behind the young people as we went, and she asked, «What *do* you suppose she made of it all?»

«Probably she thought it was the House of Sancho Panza.»

«No; she has n't read enough to be so ignorant even as that. It's astonishing how much she does n't know. What can her home life have been like?»

«Philistine to the last degree. We people who are near to literature have no conception how far from it most people are. The immense majority of «homes,» as the newspapers call them, have no books in them except the Bible and a semi-religious volume

or two,—things you never see out of such (homes,)—and the State business directory. I was astonished when it came out that she knew about (Every Other Week.) It must have been by accident. The sordidness of her home life must be something unimaginable. The daughter of a village capitalist, who's put together his money dollar by dollar, as they do in such places, from the necessities and follies of his neighbors, and has half the farmers of the region by the throat through his mortgages—I don't think she's (one to be desired) any more than (the daughter of a hundred earls,) if so much."

"She does n't seem sordid herself."

"Oh, the taint does n't show itself at once:

(If nature put not forth her  
power  
About the opening of the  
flower,  
Who is it that could live an  
hour?)

and she *is* a flower, beautiful, exquisite."

"Yes; and she had a mother as well as this father of hers. Why should n't she be like her mother?"

I laughed. "That is true. I wonder why we always leave the mother out of the count when we sum up the hereditary tendencies? I suppose the mother is as much a parent as the father?"

"Quite. And there is no reason why this girl should n't have her mother's nature."

"We don't actually *know* anything against her father's nature yet," I suggested; "but if her mother lived a starved and stunted life with him, it may account for that effect of disappointed greed which I fancied in her when I first saw her."

"I don't call it greed in a young girl to want to see something of the world."

"What do you call it?"

Kendricks and the girl were stopping at the gate of the pavilion, and looking round at us. "Ah, he's got enough for one day! He's going to leave her to us now."



DRAWN BY IRVING R. WILES.

THE BOOKSTALL.

ENGRAVED BY C. SCHWARZBURGER.

When we came up he said, "I'm going to run off a moment; I'm going up to the bookstore there," and he pointed toward one that had spread across the sidewalk just below the Congress Hall veranda, with banks and shelves of novels, and a cry of bargains in them on signs sticking up from their rows. "I want to see if they have the (Last Days of Pompeii.)"

"We will find the ladies inside the park," I said. "I will go with you—"

"Mr. March wants to see if they have the last number of (Every Other Week,)" my wife mocked after us. This was, indeed, commonly a foible of mine. I had newly become one of the owners of the periodical as well as the editor, and I was all the time looking out for it at news-stands and book-stores, and judging their enterprise by its presence or absence. But this time I had another motive, though I did not allege it.

"I suppose it's for Miss Gage?" I ventured



to say, by way of prefacing what I wished to say. «Kendricks, I'm afraid we're abusing your good nature. I know you're up here to look about, and you're letting us use all your time. You mustn't do it. Women have no conscience about these things, and you can't expect a woman who has a young lady on her hands to spare you. I give you the hint. Don't count upon Mrs. March in this matter.»

«Oh, I think you're very good to allow me to bother round,» said the young fellow, with that indefatigable politeness of his. He added vaguely, «It's very interesting.»

«Seeing it through such a fresh mind?» I suggested. «Well, I'll own that I don't think you could have found a much fresher one. Has she read 'The Last Days of Pompeii?'»

«She thought she had at first, but it was 'The Fall of Granada.'»

«How delightful! Don't you wish we could read books with that utterly unlitrary sense of them?»

«Don't you think women generally do?» he asked evasively.

«I dare say they do at De Witt Point.»

He did not answer; I saw that he was not willing to talk the young lady over, and I could not help praising his taste to myself at the cost of my own. His delicacy forbade him the indulgence which my own protested against in vain. He showed his taste again in buying a cheap copy of the book, which he meant to give her, and of course he had to be all the more attentive to her because of my deprecating his self-devotion.

## XI.

IN the intimacy that grew up between my wife and Miss Gage I found myself less and less included. It seemed to me at times that I might have gone away from Saratoga and not have been seriously missed by any one; but perhaps this was not taking sufficient account of my value as a spectator by whom Mrs. March could verify her own impressions.

The girl had never known a mother's care, and it was affecting to see how willing she was to be mothered by the chance kindness of a stranger. She probably felt more and more her ignorance of the world as it unfolded itself to her in terms so altogether strange to the life of De Witt Point. I was not sure that she would have been so grateful for the efforts made for her enjoyment if they had failed, but as the case stood she was certainly grateful; my wife said that, and I saw it. She seemed to have written home about us to her father, for she read my wife

part of a letter from him conveying his «respects,» and asking her to thank us for him. She came to me with the check it inclosed, and asked me to get it cashed for her; it was for a handsome amount. But she continued to go about at our cost, quite unconsciously, till one day she happened to witness a contest of civility between Kendricks and me as to which should pay the carriage we were dismissing. That night she came to Mrs. March, and, with many blushes, asked to be allowed to pay for the past and the future her full share of the expense of our joint pleasures. She said that she had never thought of it before, and she felt so much ashamed. She could not be consoled till she was promised that she should be indulged for the future, and that I should be obliged to average the outlay already made and let her pay a fourth. When she had gained her point, Mrs. March said that she seemed a little scared, and said: «I have not offended you, Mrs. March, have I? Because if it is not right for me to pay—»

«It's quite right, my dear,» said my wife; «and it's very nice of you to think of it.»

«You know,» the girl explained, «I've never been out a great deal at home even; and it's always the custom there for the gentlemen to pay for a ride—or dance—or anything; but this is different.»

Mrs. March said «Yes,» and, in the interest of civilization, she did a little missionary work. She told her that in Boston the young ladies paid for their tickets to the Harvard assemblies, and preferred to do it, because it left them without even a tacit obligation.

Miss Gage said she had never heard of such a thing before, but she could see how much better it was.

I do not think she got on with «The Last Days of Pompeii» very rapidly; its immediate interest was superseded by other things. But she always had the book about with her, and I fancied that she tried to read it in those moments of relaxation from our pleasuring when she might better have been day-dreaming, though I dare say she did enough of that too.

What amused me in the affair was the celerity with which it took itself out of our hands. In an incredibly short time we had no longer the trouble of thinking what we should do for Miss Gage; that was provided for by the forethought of Kendricks, and our concern was how each could make the other go with the young people on their excursions and expeditions. We had seen and done all the things that they were doing,

and it presently bored us to chaperon them. After a good deal of talking we arrived at a rough division of duty, and I went with them walking and eating and drinking, and for anything involving late hours, and Mrs. March presided at such things as carriage exercise, concerts, and shopping.

There are not many public entertainments in Saratoga, except such as the hotels supply; but there was a series of Salvation

like the play of children in that. I should have said that nothing could be more false than the motives and emotions of the drama as the author imagined them, but I had to own that their rendition by these sincere souls was yet more artificial. There was nothing traditional, nothing archaic, nothing autochthonic in their poor art. If the scene could at any moment have resolved itself into a walk-round, with an interspersion of «spir-

ituals,» it would have had the charm of these; it would have consoled and edified: but as it was, I have seldom been so bored. I began to make some sad reflections, as that our American society, in its endeavor for the effect of European society, was of no truer ideal than these colored comedians, and I accused myself of a final absurdity in having come there with these young people, who, according to our good native usage, could have come perfectly well without me. At the end of the first act I broke into their talk with my conclusion that we must not count the histrionic talent among the gifts of the African race just yet. We could concede them music, I supposed, and there seemed to be hope for them, from what some of them had done, in the region of the plastic arts; but apparently the stage was not for them, and this was all the stranger because they were so imitative. Perhaps, I said, it was an excess of self-consciousness which prevented their giving themselves wholly to the art, and I began to speak



DRAWN BY IRVING R. WILES.

ENGRAVED BY A. NEGRI.

«I DO NOT THINK SHE GOT ON . . . VERY RAPIDLY.»

Army meetings, and there was at least one theatrical performance—a performance of «East Lynne» entirely by people of color. The sentiments and incidents of the heart-breaking melodrama, as the colored mind interpreted them, were of very curious effect. It was as if the version were dyed with the same pigment that darkened the players' skins: it all came out negro. Yet they had tried to make it white; I could perceive how they aimed not at the imitation of our nature, but at the imitation of our convention; it was

of the subjective and the objective, of the real and the ideal; and whether it was that I became unintelligible as I became metaphysical, I found Kendricks obviously not following me in the incoherent replies he gave. Miss Gage had honestly made no attempt to follow me. He asked, Why, did n't I think it was pretty well done? They had been enjoying it very much, he said. I could only stare in answer, and wonder what had become of the man's tastes or his principles; he was either humbugging himself or he was hum-

bugging me. After that I left them alone, and suffered through the rest of the play with what relief I could get from laughing when the pathetic emotions of the drama became too poignant. I decided that Kendricks was absorbed in the study of his companion's mind, which must be open to his contemporaneous eye as it could never have been to my old-sighted glasses, and I envied him the knowledge he was gaining of that type of American girl. It suddenly came to me that he must be finding his account in this, and I felt a little less regret for the waste of civilities, of attentions, which sometimes seemed to me beyond her appreciation.

I, for my part, gave myself to the study of the types about me, and I dwelt long and luxuriously upon the vision of a florid and massive matron in diaphanous evening dress, whom I imagined to be revisiting the glimpses of her girlhood in the ancient watering-place, and to be getting all the gaiety she could out of it. These are the figures one mostly sees at Saratoga; there is very little youth of the present day there, but the youth of the past abounds, with the belated yellow hair or the purple mustaches, which give a notion of greater wickedness in a former generation.

I made my observation that the dress, even in extreme cases of elderly prime, was very good—in the case of the women, I mean; the men there, as everywhere with us, were mostly slovens; and I was glad to find that the good taste and the correct fashion were without a color-line; there were some mulatto ladies present as stylish as their white sisters, or step-sisters.

The most amiable of the human race is in great force at Saratoga, where the vast hotel service is wholly in its hands, and it had honored the effort of the comedians that night with a full house of their own complexion. We who were not of it showed strangely enough in the dark mass, who let us lead the applause, however, as if doubtful themselves where it ought to come in, and whom I found willing even to share some misplaced laughter of mine. They formed two thirds of the audience on the floor, and they were a cloud in the gallery, scarcely broken by a gleam of white.

I entertained myself with them a good deal, and I thought how much more delightful they were in their own kindly character than in their assumption of white character, and I tried to define my suffering from the performance as an effect from my tormented sympathies rather than from my offended tastes. When the long stress was over, and

we rose and stood to let the crowd get out, I asked Miss Gage if she did not think this must be the case. I do not suppose she was really much more experienced in the theater than the people on the stage, some of whom I doubted to have ever seen a play till they took part in "East Lynne." But I thought I would ask her that in order to hear what she would say; and she said very simply that she had seen so few plays she did not know what to think of it, and I could see that she was abashed by the fact. Kendricks must have seen it too, for he began at once to save her from herself, with all his subtle generosity, and to turn her shame to praise. My heart, which remained sufficiently cold to her, warmed more than ever to him, and I should have liked to tell her that here was the finest and rarest human porcelain using itself like common clay in her behalf, and to demand whether she thought she was worth it.

I did not think she was, and I had a lurid moment when I was tempted to push on and make her show herself somehow at her worst. We had undertaken a preposterous thing in befriending her as we had done, and our course in bringing Kendricks in was wholly unjustifiable. How could I lead her on to some betrayal of her essential Philistinism, and make her so impossible in his eyes that even he, with all his sweetness and goodness, must take the first train from Saratoga in the morning?

We had of course joined the crowd in pushing forward; people always do, though they promise themselves to wait till the last one is out. I got caught in a dark eddy on the first stair-landing; but I could see them farther down, and I knew they would wait for me outside the door.

When I reached it at last they were nowhere to be seen; I looked up this street and down that, but they were not in sight.

## XII.

I DID not afflict myself very much, or pretend to do so. They knew the way home, and after I had blundered about in search of them through the lamp-shot darkness, I settled myself to walk back at my leisure, comfortably sure that I should find them on the veranda waiting for me when I reached the hotel. It was a thick night, and I almost ran into a couple at a corner of our quieter street when I had got to it out of Broadway. They seemed to be standing and looking about, and when the man said, "He must have thought we took the first turn," and the woman, "Yes;





DRAWN BY IRVING R. WILES.

ENGRAVED BY F. H. WELLINGTON.

«I KNEW THEY WOULD WAIT FOR ME OUTSIDE THE DOOR.»

that must have been the way," I recognized my estrays.

I thought I would not discover myself to them, but follow on, and surprise them by arriving at our steps at the same moment they did, and I prepared myself to hurry after them. But they seemed in no hurry, and I had even some difficulty in accommodating my pace to the slowness of theirs.

"Won't you take my arm, Miss Gage?" he asked as they moved on.

"It's so *very* dark," she answered (and I knew she had taken it), "I can hardly see a step; and poor Mr. March, with his glasses—I don't know what he'll do."

"Oh, he only uses them to read with; he can see as well as we can in the dark."

"He's very young in his feelings," said the girl; "he puts me in mind of my own father."

"He's very young in his thoughts," said Kendrick; "and that's much more to the

purpose for a magazine editor. There are very few men of his age who keep in touch with the times as he does."

"Still, Mrs. March seems a good deal younger, don't you think? I wonder how soon they begin to feel old?"

"Oh, not till along in the forties, I should say. It's a good deal in temperament. I don't suppose that either of them realizes yet that they're old, and they must be nearly fifty."

"How strange it must be," said the girl, "to be fifty years old! Twenty seems old enough, goodness knows."

"How should you like to be a dotard of twenty-seven?" Kendrick asked, and she laughed at his joke.

"I don't suppose I should mind it so much if I were a man."

I had promised myself that if the talk became at all confidential I would drop behind out of ear-shot; but though it was curiously intimate for me to be put apart in the minds of these young people on account of my years as not of the same race or fate as themselves, there was nothing in what they said that I might not innocently overhear, as far as they were concerned, and I listened on.

But they had apparently given me quite enough attention. After some reciprocal laughter at what she said last, they were silent a moment, and then he said soberly: "There's something fine in the isolation the dark gives

you, is n't there? You're as remote in it from our own time and place as if you were wandering in interplanetary space."

"I suppose we *are* doing that all the time—on the earth," she suggested.

"Yes; but how hard it is to realize that we are on the earth now. Sometimes I have a sense of it, though, when the moon breaks from one flying cloud to another. Then it seems as if I were a passenger on some vast, shapeless ship sailing through the air. What," he asked, with no relevancy that I could perceive, "was the strangest feeling *you* ever had?" I remembered asking girls such questions when I was young, and their not apparently thinking it at all odd.

"I don't know," she returned thoughtfully. "There was one time when I was little, and it had sleeted, and the sun came out just before it set, and seemed to set all the woods on fire. I thought the world was burning up."

«It must have been very weird,» said Kendricks; and I thought, «Oh, good heavens! Has he got to talking of weird things?»

«It's strange,» he added, «how we all have that belief when we are children, that the world is going to burn up! I don't suppose any child escapes it. Do you remember that poem of Thomson's,—the «City of Dreadful Night» man,—where he describes the end of the world?»

«No; I never read it.»

«Well, merely, he says when the conflagration began the little flames looked like crocuses breaking through the sod. If it ever happened, I fancy it would be quite as simple as that. But perhaps you don't like gloomy poetry?»

«Yes, yes, I do. It's the only kind that I care about.»

«Then you hate funny poetry?»

«I think it's disgusting. Papa is always cutting it out of the papers and wanting to send it to me, and we have the greatest times!»

«I suppose,» said Kendricks, «it expresses some moods, though.»

«Oh, yes; it expresses some moods; and sometimes it makes me laugh in spite of myself, and ashamed of anything serious.»

«That's always the effect of a farce with me.»

«But then I'm ashamed of being ashamed afterward,» said the girl. «I suppose you go to the theater a great deal in New York.»

«It's a school of life,» said Kendricks. «I mean the audience.»

«I would like to go to the opera once. I am going to make papa take me in the winter.» She laughed with a gay sense of power, and he said:

«You seem to be great friends with your father.»

«Yes; we're always together. I always went everywhere with him; this is the first time I've been away without him. But I thought I'd come with Mrs. Deering and see what Saratoga was like; I had never been here.»

«And is it like what you thought?»

«No! The first week we did n't do anything. Then we got acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. March, and I began really to see something. But I supposed it was all balls and gaiety.»

«We must get up a few if you're so fond of them,» Kendricks playfully suggested.

«Oh, I don't know as I am. I never went much at home. Papa did n't care to have me.»

«Ah, do you think it was right for him to keep you all to himself?»

The girl did not answer, and they had both halted so abruptly that I almost ran into them.

«I don't quite make out where we are,» Kendricks said, and he seemed to be peering about. I plunged across the street lest he should ask me. But I heard him add, «Oh, yes; I know now,» and then they pressed forward.

We were quite near our hotel, but I thought it best to walk round the square and let them arrive first. On the way I amused myself thinking how differently the girl had shown herself to him from what she had ever shown herself to my wife or me. She had really, this plain-minded goddess, a vein of poetic feeling, some inner beauty of soul answering to the outer beauty of body. She had a romantic attachment to her father, and this shed a sort of light on both of them, though I knew that it was not always a revelation of character.

### XIII.

WHEN I reached the hotel I found Miss Gage at the door, and Kendricks coming out of the office toward her.

«Oh, here he is!» she called to him at sight of me.

«Where in the world have you been?» he demanded. «I had just found out from the clerk that you had n't come in yet, and I was going back for you with a search-light.»

«Oh, I was n't so badly lost as all that,» I returned. «I missed you in the crowd at the door, but I knew you'd get home somehow, and so I came on without you. But my aged steps are not so quick as yours.»

The words, mechanically uttered, suggested something, and I thought that if they were in for weirdness I would give them as much weirdness as they could ask for. «When you get along toward fifty you'll find that the foot you've still got out of the grave does n't work so lively as it used. Besides, I was interested in the night effect. It's so gloriously dark; and I had a fine sense of isolation as I came along, as if I were altogether out of my epoch and my environment. I felt as if the earth was a sort of *Flying Dutchman*, and I was the only passenger. It was about the weirdest sensation I ever had. It reminded me, I don't know how, exactly of the feeling I had when I was young, and I saw the sunset one evening through the woods after a sleet-storm.»

They stared at each other as I went on, and



I could see Kendricks's fine eyes kindle with an imaginative appreciation of the literary quality of the coincidence. But when I added, «Did you ever read a poem about the end of the world by that (City of Dreadful Night) man?» Miss Gage impulsively caught me by the coat lapel and shook me.

«Ah, it *was* you all the time! I *knew* there was somebody following us, and I might have *known* who it was!»

We all gave way to a gale of laughter, and sat down on the veranda and had our joke out in a full recognition of the fact. When Kendricks rose to go at last I said, «We won't say anything about this little incident to Mrs. March, hey?» And then they laughed again as if it were the finest wit in the world, and Miss Gage bade me a joyful good night at the head of the stairs as she went off to her room and I to mine.

I found Mrs. March waiting up with a book, and as soon as I shut myself in with her she said awfully, «What *were* you laughing so about?»

«Laughing? Did you hear me laughing?»

«The whole house heard you, I'm afraid. You certainly ought to have known better, Basil. It was very inconsiderate of you.» And, as I saw she was going on with more of that sort of thing, to divert her thoughts from my crime I told her the whole story. It had quite the effect I intended up to a certain point. She even smiled a little, as much as a woman could be expected to smile who was not originally in the joke.

«And they had got to comparing weird experiences?» she asked.

«Yes; the staleness of the thing almost made me sick. Do you remember when we first began to compare our weird experiences? But I suppose they will go on doing it to the end of time, and it will have as great a charm for the last man and woman as it had for Adam and Eve when they compared *their* weird experiences.»

«And was that what you were laughing at?»

«We were laughing at the wonderful case of telepathy I put on them.»

Mrs. March faced her open book down on the table before her, and looked at me with profound solemnity. «Well, then, I can tell you, my dear, it is no laughing matter. If they have got to the weird it is very serious; and her talking to him about her family, and his wanting to know about her father, that's serious too—far more serious than either of them can understand. I don't like it, Basil; we have got a terrible affair on our hands.»

«Terrible?»

«Yes, terrible. As long as he was interested in her simply from a literary point of view, though I did n't like that either, I could put up with it; but now that he's got to telling her about himself, and exchanging weird experiences with her, it's another thing altogether. Oh, I never wanted Kendricks brought into the affair at all.»

«Come now, Isabel! Stick to the facts, please.»

«No matter! It was you that discovered the girl, and then something had to be done. I was perfectly shocked when you told me that Mr. Kendricks was in town, because I saw at once that he would have to be got in for it; and now we have to think what we shall do.»

«Could n't we think better in the morning?»

«No; we must think at once. I shall not sleep to-night, anyhow. My peace is gone. I shall have to watch them every instant.»

«Beginning at this instant? Why not wait till you can see them?»

«Oh, you can't joke it away, my dear. If I find they are really interested in each other I shall have to speak. I am responsible.»

«The young lady,» I said, more to gain time than anything else, «seems quite capable of taking care of herself.»

«That makes it all the worse. Do you think I care for her only? It's Kendricks too that I care for. I don't know that I care for her at all.»

«Oh, then I think we may fairly leave Kendricks to his own devices; and I'm not alarmed for Miss Gage either, though I do care for her a great deal.»

«I don't understand how you can be so heartless about it, Basil,» said Mrs. March, plaintively. «She is a young girl, and she has never seen anything of the world, and of course if he keeps on paying her attention in this way she can't help thinking that he is interested in her. Men never can see such things as women do. They think that, until a man has actually asked a girl to marry him, he has n't done anything to warrant her in supposing that he is in love with her, or that she has any right to be in love with him.»

«That is true; we can't imagine that she would be so indelicate.»

«I see that you're determined to tease, my dear,» said Mrs. March, and she took up her book with an air of offense and dismissal. «If you won't talk seriously, I hope you will *think* seriously, and try to realize what we've got in for. Such a girl could n't imagine that we had simply got Mr. Kendricks to go about with her from a romantic wish to make her

have a good time, and that he was doing it to oblige us, and was n't at all interested in her."

"It does look a little preposterous, even to the outsider," I admitted.

"I am glad you are beginning to see it in that light, my dear; and if you can think of anything to do by morning, I shall be humbly thankful. I don't expect to."

"Perhaps I shall dream of something," I said more lightly than I felt. "How would it do for you to have a little talk with her,—a little motherly talk,—and hint round, and warn her not to let her feelings run away with her in Kendricks's direction?" Mrs. March faced her book down in her lap, and listened as if there might be some reason in the nonsense I was talking. "You might say that he was a society man, and was in great request, and then intimate that there was a prior attachment, or that he was the kind of man who would never marry, but was really cold-hearted with all his sweetness, and merely had a passion for studying character."

"Do you think that would do, Basil?" she asked.

"Well, I don't know; I thought perhaps you might think so."

"I'm afraid it would n't," she sighed. "All that we can do now is to watch them, and then act promptly, if we see that they are really in love, either of them."

"I don't believe," I said, "that I should know that they were in love even if I saw it. I have forgotten the outward signs, if I ever knew them. Should he give her flowers? He's done it from the start; he's brought her boxes of candy, and lent her books; but I dare say he's been merely complying with our wishes in doing it. I doubt if lovers sigh nowadays. I didn't sigh myself, even in my time; and I don't believe any passion could make Kendricks neglect his dress. He keeps his eyes on her all the time, but that may be merely an effort to divine her character. I don't believe I should know, my dear; indeed I don't."

"I shall," said Mrs. March.

#### XIV.

WE were to go the next day to the races, and I woke with more anxiety about the weather than about the lovers, or potential lovers. But after realizing that the day was beautiful, on that large scale of loveliness which seems characteristic of the summer days at Saratoga, where they have them almost the size of the summer days I knew when I was a boy, I was sensible of a secondary worry in my

mind, which presently related itself to Kendricks and Miss Gage. It was a haze of trouble merely, however, such as burns off, like a morning fog, as the sun gets higher, and it was chiefly on my wife's account.

I suppose that the great difference between her conscience and one originating outside of New England (if any consciences can originate outside of New England) is that it cannot leave the moral government of the universe in the hands of divine Providence. I was willing to leave so many things which I could not control to the Deity, who probably could, that she accused me of fatalism, and I was held to be little better than one of the wicked because I would not forecast the effects of what I did in the lives of others. I insisted that others were also probably in the hands of the *somma sapienza e il primo amore*, and that I was so little aware of the influence of other lives upon my own, even where there had been a direct and strenuous effort to affect me, that I could not readily believe others had swerved from the line of their destiny because of me. Especially I protested that I could not hold myself guilty of misfortunes I had not intended, even though my faulty conduct had caused them. As to this business of Kendricks and Miss Gage, I denied in the dispute I now began tacitly to hold with Mrs. March's conscience that my conduct had been faulty. I said that there was no earthly harm in my having been interested by the girl's forlornness when I first saw her; that I did not do wrong to interest Mrs. March in her; that she did not sin in going shopping with Miss Gage and Mrs. Deering; that we had not sinned, either of us, in rejoicing that Kendricks had come to Saratoga, or in letting Mrs. Deering go home to her sick husband and leave Miss Gage on our hands; that we were not wicked in permitting the young fellow to help us make her have a good time. In this colloquy I did all the reasoning, and Mrs. March's conscience was completely silenced; but it rose triumphant in my miserable soul when I met Miss Gage at breakfast, looking radiantly happy, and disposed to fellowship me in an unusual confidence because, as I clearly perceived, of our last night's adventure. I said to myself bitterly that happiness did not become her style, and I hoped that she would get away with her confounded rapture before Mrs. March came down. I resolved not to tell Mrs. March if it fell out so, but at the same time, as a sort of atonement, I decided to begin keeping the sharpest kind of watch upon Miss Gage for the outward signs and tokens of love.

She said, «When you began to talk that way last night, Mr. March, it almost took my breath; and if you had n't gone so far, and mentioned about the sunset through the sleety trees, I never should have suspected you.»

«Ah, that's the trouble with men, Miss Gage.» And when I said «men» I fancied she flushed a little. «We never know when to stop; we always overdo it; if it were not for that we should be as perfect as women. Perhaps you'll give me another chance, though.»

«No; we shall be on our guard after this.» She corrected herself and said, «I shall always be looking out for you now,» and she certainly showed herself conscious in the bridling glance that met my keen gaze.

«Good heavens!» I thought. «Has it really gone so far?» and more than ever I resolved not to tell Mrs. March.

I went out to engage a carriage to take us to the races, and to agree with the driver that he should wait for us at a certain corner some blocks distant from our hotel, where we were to walk and find him. We always did this, because there were a number of clergymen in our house, and Mrs. March could not make it seem right to start for the races direct from the door, though she held that it was perfectly right for us to go. For the same reason she made the driver stop short of our destination on our return, and walked home the rest of the way. Almost the first time we practised this deception I was met at the door by the sweetest and dearest of these old divines, who said: «Have you ever seen the races here? I'm told the spectacle is something very fine»; and I was obliged to own that I had once had a glimpse of them. But it was in vain that I pleaded this fact with Mrs. March; she insisted that the appearance of not going to the races was something that we owed the cloth, and no connivance on their part could dispense us from it.

As I now went looking up and down the street for the driver who was usually on the watch for me about eleven o'clock on a fair day of the races, I turned over in my mind the several accidents which are employed in novels to bring young people to a realizing sense of their feelings toward each other, and wondered which of them I might most safely invoke. I was not anxious to have Kendricks and Miss Gage lovers; it would be altogether simpler for us if they were not; but if they were, the sooner they knew it and we knew it the better. I thought of a carriage accident, in which he should seize her and leap with her from the flying vehicle, while the

horses plunged madly on; but I did not know what in this case would become of Mrs. March and me. Besides, I could think of nothing that would frighten our driver's horses, and I dismissed the fleeting notion of getting any others because Mrs. March liked their being so safe, and she had, also, interested herself particularly in the driver, who had a family and counted upon our custom. The poor fellow came in sight presently, and smilingly made the usual arrangement with me, and an hour later he delivered us all sound in wind and limb at the race-course.

I watched in vain for signs of uncommon tenderness in the two young people. If anything, they were rather stiff and distant with each other, and I asked myself whether this might not be from an access of consciousness. Kendricks was particularly devoted to Mrs. March, who, in the airy detachment with which she responded to his attentions, gave me the impression that she had absolutely dismissed her suspicions of the night before, or else had heartlessly abandoned the affair to me altogether. If she had really done this, then I saw no way out of it for me but by an accident which should reveal them to each other. Perhaps some one might insult Miss Gage,—some ruffian,—and Kendricks might strike the fellow; but this seemed too squalid. There might be a terrible jam, and he interpose his person between her and the danger of her being crushed to death; or the floor of the grand stand might give way, and everybody be precipitated into the space beneath, and he fight his way, with her senseless form on his arm, over the bodies of the mangled and dying. Any of these things would have availed in a novel, and something of the kind would have happened too. But, to tell the truth, nothing whatever happened, and if it had not been for that anxiety on my mind I should have thought it much pleasanter so.

Even as it was I felt a measure of the hilarity which commonly fills me at a running race, and I began to lose in the charm of the gay scene the sense of my responsibility, and little by little to abate the vigilance apparently left all to me. The day was beautiful; the long heat had burned itself out, and there was a clear sparkle in the sunshine, which seemed blown across the wide space within the loop of the track by the delicate breeze. A vague, remote smell of horses haunted the air, with now and then a breath of the pines from the grove shutting the race-ground from the highway. We got excellent places, as one always may, the grand stand is so vast;



and the young people disposed themselves on the bench in front of us, but so near that we were not tempted to talk them over. The newsboys came round with papers, and the boys who sold programs of the races; from the bar below there appeared from time to time shining negroes in white linen jackets, with trays bearing tall glasses of lemonade, and straws tilted in the glasses. Book-makers from the pool-rooms took the bets of the ladies, who formed by far the greater part of the spectators on the grand stand, and contributed, with their summer hats and gowns,

ground, Mr. March. I should n't feel it right to do anything with Saratoga after you had discovered it," and he turned eagerly again to Miss Gage.

My wife put her hand on my sleeve and frowned, and I had so far lost myself in my appreciation of the scene that I was going to ask her what the matter was, when a general sensation about me made me look at the track, where the horses for the first race had already appeared, with their jockeys in vivid silk jackets of various dyes. They began to form for the start, with the usual



DRAWN BY IRVING R. WILES.

AT THE RACES.

ENGRAVED BY PETER AITKEN.

to the gaiety of the ensemble. They were of all types, city and country both, and of the Southern dark as well as the Northern fair complexion, with so thick a sprinkling of South Americans that the Spanish gutturals made themselves almost as much heard as the Yankee nasals. Among them moved two nuns of some mendicant order, receiving charity from the fair gamblers, who gave for luck without distinction of race or religion.

I leaned forward and called Kendrick's attention to the nuns, and to the admirable literary quality of the whole situation. He was talking to Miss Gage, and he said as impatiently as he ever suffered himself to speak, "Yes, yes; tremendously picturesque."

"You ought to get something out of it, my dear fellow. Don't you feel (copy) in it?"

"Oh, splendid, of course; but it's your

tricks and feints, till I became very indignant with them, though I had no bets pending, and did not care in the least which horse won. What I wanted was to see the race, the flight, and all this miserable manœuvering was retarding it. Now and then a jockey rode his horse far off on the track and came back between the false starts; now and then one kept stubbornly behind the rest and would not start with them. How their several schemes and ambitions were finally reconciled I never could tell, but at last the starter's flag swept down and they were really off. All could have seen perfectly well as they sat, but all rose and watched the swift swoop of the horses, bunched together in the distance, and scarcely distinguishable by the colors of their riders. The supreme moment came for me when they were exactly opposite

the grand stand, full half a mile away,—the moment that I remembered from year to year as one of exquisite illusion,—for then the horses seemed to lift from the earth as with wings, and to skim over the track like a covey of low-flying birds. The finish was tame to this. Mrs. March and I had our wonted difference of opinion as to which horse had won, and we were rather uncommonly controversial because we had both decided upon the same horse, as we found, only she was talking of the jockey's colors, and I was talking of the horse's. We appealed to Kendricks, who said that another horse altogether had won the race, and this compromise pacified us.

We were all on foot, and he suggested, «We could see better, could n't we, if we went farther down in front?» And Mrs. March answered:

«No, we prefer to stay here; but you two can go.» And when they had promptly availed themselves of her leave, she said to me: «This is killing me dead, Basil; and if it keeps up much longer I don't believe I can live through it. I don't care now, and I believe I shall throw them together all I can from this out. The quicker they decide whether they're in love or not the better. I have some rights too.»

Her whirling words expressed the feeling in my own mind. I had the same sense of being trifled with by these young people, who would not behave so conclusively toward each other as to justify our interference on the ground that they were in love, nor yet treat each other so indifferently as to relieve us of the strain of apprehension. I had lost all faith in accident by this time and I was quite

willing to leave them to their own devices; I was so desperate that I said I hoped they would get lost from us, as they had from me the night before, and never come back, but just keep on wandering round forever. All sorts of evil and vengeful thoughts went through my mind as I saw them leaning toward each other to say something, and then drawing apart to laugh at it in what seemed an indefinite and careless comradeship instead of an irrepressible passion. Did they think we were going to let this sort of thing go on forever? What did they suppose our nerves were made of? Had they no mercy, no consideration for others? It was quite like the selfishness of youth to wish to continue in that fools' paradise, but they would find out that middle age had its rights too. I felt myself capable of asking them bluntly what they meant by it.

But when they docilely rejoined us at the end of the races, hurrying up with some joke about not letting me get lost this time, and Miss Gage put herself at my wife's side and Kendricks dropped into step with me, all I had been thinking about them seemed absurd. They were just two young people who were enjoying a holiday time together simply and naturally, and we were in no wise answerable, far less culpable, concerning them.

I suggested this to Mrs. March when we got home, and, in the need of some relief from the tension she had been in, she was fain to accept the theory provisionally, though I knew that her later rejection of it would be all the more violent for this respite.

(To be continued.)

*W. D. Howells.*

## THE ROSE OF STARS.

WHEN Love, our great Immortal,  
Put on mortality,  
And down from Eden's portal  
Brought this sweet world to be,  
At the sublime archangel  
He laughed with veiled eyes,  
For he bore within his bosom  
The seed of Paradise.

He hid it in his bosom,  
And there such warmth it found,  
It brake in bud and blossom,  
And the rose fell on the ground;  
As the green light on the prairie,  
As the red light on the sea,  
Through fragrant belts of summer  
Came this sweet world to be.

And the grave archangel, seeing,  
Spread his mighty vans for flight,  
But a glow hung round him fleeing  
Like the rose of an Arctic night;  
And sadly moving heavenward  
By Venus and by Mars,  
He heard the joyful planets  
Hail Earth, the Rose of Stars.

*G. E. Woodberry.*

# PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE.

(A STORY OF SHETLAND.)

BY AMELIA E. BARR,

Author of «Friend Olivia,» «Jan Vedder's Wife,» «The Bow of Orange Ribbon,» etc.

WITH PICTURES MADE IN SHETLAND BY LOUIS LOEB.

IN TWO PARTS: PART I.

I.



HE roll of a spent gale was swinging round Vatternish toward the red, rent bastions of Skye, and its thunder amid the purple caves of the basalt and the whitened tiers of the oölite could be heard on the moor above the seaside cliffs. It was a lonely, melancholy moor, covered with heather and boulders, and encompassed by cyclopean wrecks of mountains, the vapory outlines of which suggested nothing but endless ruin.

The season was midsummer, but there had been surly whiffs of sharp rain in quick succession all day long, and the dreary levels were full of little lochs of black moss-water. Near the seaward side the land was higher, and there a circle of druidical monoliths stood huge and pale in the misty air.

Within this circle was a man. He was leaning against one of the pillars, and his fishing-nets lay upon the low central stone which had been the sacrificial altar of the dead creed. He was young and large and strong—a man not made for the narrow doorways of the town, but for the wide, stormy spaces of the unstreeted ocean. The sea was in his eyes, which were blue and outlooking. His broad breast was bared to the wind and rain. His legs were planted apart, as if he was hauling up an anchor or standing on a reeling deck. An air of somber gravity, a facesad and mystical, distinguished the solitary figure; he was the unconscious incarnation of the lonely land and the stormy sea.

His name was David Borson. He was the son of Liot Borson, and he lived alone with his father in a little hut between Dun Lea and Uig. Liot said they were Shetlanders, and the truth of this statement was evident; for Liot and his son were as distinctly Norse as the men of Uig were Celtic. They had the amazing size and strength of Shetlanders, and their

fitful energy. They had also their love of silence, being men with closed lips, not garulous like the Celts around them, yet subject to hours of rare but passionate and overflowing explanations.

Nevertheless they had been picked up in an open boat on the stormy waters of the Great Minch, far away from the misty island of the Shetland seas. Liot said they had sailed from Lerwick, intending to go to Stornoway, that he might leave his motherless boy with a sister who lived there: «after which it was my thought to see the world and make my fortune,» he added; «but my thought and God's will were not the same, and I am sent to Uig, and have nothing to say against it.»

David was three years old then, and he was now twenty-three, a youth whom a sad destiny had led far astray from happiness. For though he had a nature affectionate and poetic, he had never known any expression of loving-kindness, while hard toil and hard fare and much physical suffering had been the sum of all his experiences. He did not rebel against his fate; he took it as part of the inscrutable mystery of life and death constantly before his eyes. Others around him suffered in like manner—and at the end one thing happened to all.

The phantoms of a gloomy creed had darkened all his childhood; before he had shed his baby teeth hell was a tremendous reality to him. An immaculate, pitiless God, who delighted in the taking of vengeance on his enemies, haunted all his boyhood's dreams, and the «scheme of salvation,» by which perchance this implacable Deity might be conciliated, had been the beginning and the end of his education. With amazing distinctness in question and answer this «scheme» had been laid before him, and by the word and the rod of admonition he had been made familiar with the letter of its awful law.

Until his twentieth year David had lived under this spiritual tyranny, considering life