

LABAN'S DAUGHTERS.

SHELBY, by the sea-side, a watering-place with all the natural advantages of Newport, without its disadvantages of expensive living and inordinate display, was the resort of many invalids and pseudo-fashionable people. The "summer importations," as Agnes De Ruyter dubbed the people who, like birds of passage, took up their abode in Shelby for a brief season, were either persons with dilapidated systems or dilapidated fortunes. The first class had one foot in the grave, the second had their hands tied by poverty.

Agnes De Ruyter gathered up her skirts from contact with the new-comers, and held her head very high above them. Literally she did this because she was tall, being among her set of girls what Saul was among his fellows; and figuratively she did it because of her position as the daughter of the largest land-owner and most influential man in Shelby.

Agnes De Ruyter had a sort of passion for classification. At school it manifested itself in a taste for botany and conchology. She would spend whole days in determining the class and order of a new flower, and her shells were a sight to see in their beautiful arrangement and specific distribution. A little later she liked to do with people as she had done with her shells and flowers. "It's pleasant to put them just where they belong," she would say, in her confidently secure way, as if humanity, in its infinite variety of developments, were as easily assorted as her basket of shells.

She stood at her window one morning watching the dull gray clouds that were full of wind and wet, and classifying the occasional passers-by who dared to brave the east wind's dampness and chill. Most of the people she had known for years, for the season was late, and summer importations were as yet rare, and inclined to be migratory in their habits—coming to Shelby for a few days, and returning to the city at the approach of such a storm as was brewing in the clouds that day. Agnes De Ruyter was not much interested in her watch that morning. There could not have been a more uninteresting sky; and nobody passed but the minister, and a grocer, and Abner Styles the flour merchant, and old Dr. Ward, and an errand boy, and a neighbor's servant. All these people had been pronounced upon, marked, and labeled years ago.

Suddenly there appeared at a turn of the road a woman, and Agnes De Ruyter's eyes took a look of astonishment. This woman was a summer importation who, according to Agnes's words, had "forced the season" by coming down to Shelby a week before. Agnes had pronounced her an invalid, but she changed her mind when she saw her coming down the street that raw day in March. No invalid would dare venture out in such an air. And then, this woman's step was brisk and elastic as her own, and there was no stoop in her shoulders or lan-

guor in her manner. Not being an invalid, Agnes De Ruyter turned her over to her other class of pseudo-fashionable people. But the woman's water-proof suit, thick blue veil, and heavy boots were much too plain and sensible for that sort of person, who always put on airs and a flashy style of dress, she said. Agnes De Ruyter was dimly conscious that she who passed down the street was a lady, and that she belonged to neither of the classes who were wont to come to Shelby. She was thinking of her still when wheels rattled along the street, and Agnes, looking out, recognized Dr. Vredenburg's gig tilting along at its usual rapid rate.

"What a dog's life a doctor's is!" she exclaimed, musingly. "Out in all weathers, and never able to think of his own comfort, poor man!"

"It is harder for an old man like Dr. Ward than a younger man like Vredenburg," commented her mother, half dissenting.

"I suppose so," answered Agnes, blushing guiltily. She took up her sewing and fell to thinking of Dr. Vredenburg. A bachelor of the genus *interesting*, she had never been quite able to define his species. One day she would pronounce judgment upon him, and the next day she would reverse her decision. It was very provoking! How could she put people where they belonged if they were one thing one day and something else another?

Some time later she said to her mother, starting up and walking to the window: "Why, the lady down at Maple Cottage can not be quite a stranger. There she goes, chatting animatedly with Abner Styles. Some of her friends are in the flour business, I suppose."

Agnes De Ruyter dropped into Abner Styles's house that afternoon. "It's such a miserable day!" she said to Mary Styles, the flour merchant's good-natured, dumpy little wife. "I've been poking around home all day until I've really got the blues. Shelby is dreadfully stupid on such a day. I declare, if Pa persists in spending all his days here I'll elope with the first dilapidated specimen of humanity who comes down to Shelby for his health! How is the baby, Mrs. Styles?"

"He's better this morning, thank you, Miss Agnes," Mary Styles answered. "Dr. Vredenburg was with him several hours last night. He is a very faithful man, Miss Agnes, Dr. Vredenburg is. If Johnnie had been his own child he couldn't have done more for him. He said he would drop in this afternoon, and there comes his gig now. He's a good man, Miss Agnes. Why don't you set your cap for him?"

Agnes De Ruyter laughed as she answered, "How do you know but I have? If I haven't, I'll do it now"—and she stepped to the mirror to adjust her jaunty round hat more becomingly just as Dr. Vredenburg entered.

He was a large and stalwart man, with a fine head and a conscious dignity in his bearing. His black hair, somewhat carelessly kept, was

now tossed back from his forehead with a single stroke of his large hand, as if Agnes De Ruyter's presence had reminded him that he might not be altogether presentable in ladies' society, and then he shook hands heartily with the ladies, and made inquiries after the sick child.

"Do you know the young lady at Maple Cottage?" Agnes De Ruyter inquired of Mary Styles, as Dr. Vredenburg stood measuring some powders at the window.

"Oh yes!" Mary Styles answered. "Abner has always known Miss Sprague. He was a clerk in her father's employ years ago."

"Then she isn't one—"

Agnes De Ruyter hesitated, blushing, for Dr. Vredenburg had paused in measuring his powders, and was listening with a curious look on his face. "She isn't one of the sham aristocrats who affect watering-places and come to Shelby because it is cheap?" she finished, after a moment's pause.

Dr. Vredenburg turned again to the window and resumed the measurement of his powders, with a look on his face that hinted of a sneer.

"There is no sham about the Spragues. They are real aristocrats," Mary Styles answered.

"Indeed!" Agnes De Ruyter exclaimed.

Unconsciously Agnes De Ruyter was a good elocutionist. Her voice went up an ascending scale in that exclamation just as her opinion of Miss Sprague went up a peg or two.

"Her mother is an invalid, and then the Spragues are in somewhat reduced circumstances, it is true," Mary Styles continued, in further explanation.

"Oh!"

The elocution of Agnes De Ruyter's exclamations was perfect. In that word she took Miss Sprague off the Mount of Transfiguration, where she had temporarily placed her, and dropped her down into the vale where walked the multitude above whom she held her head. She had been right after all. Miss Sprague had come to Shelby because it was cheap.

"If there is any thing I hate it's reduced circumstances," she said, bitterly. "I think it won't pay to call on her."

The sneer hinted at on Dr. Vredenburg's face curled his lips now and brought a flash into his eyes. Balancing a powder on a knife blade, and surveying Agnes De Ruyter critically, you could easily guess that he was subjecting a character to a mental measurement, and the interpretation of that sneer was the judgment passed on the Babylonish king—"Tekel: Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting."

"I suppose you will be the Sprague physician," Agnes De Ruyter said, turning to Dr. Vredenburg.

Mary Styles spoke quickly, with sly humor in her eye: "Miss Sprague has no confidence in young physicians. She preferred Dr. Ward because of his age and experience. She is very decided. I shouldn't think of changing

her decision if she had once made up her mind."

Dr. Vredenburg flushed up to his temples. He was a proud man, and by that flush he stood revealed a sensitive man. "Miss Sprague is quite right," he said, "in giving the preference to age and experience. I hope none of my friends will attempt to change her decision."

"Physicians are so sensitive!" Mary Styles remarked the next day to Rachel Sprague. "I declare Dr. Vredenburg was quite hurt yesterday when I carelessly intimated that you preferred Dr. Ward."

"Dr. Vredenburg must be a very unjust man to be hurt by my preference for an older and more experienced physician," Rachel Sprague answered, with some annoyance in her tone. "This Dr. Vredenburg is quite a god among you Shelby people, I hear. I am fearful you have spoiled him. The most disagreeable man in the world is a spoiled man."

"But Dr. Vredenburg is neither a disagreeable nor a spoiled man," Abner Styles remarked, earnestly; "I want you to like him."

"I will try to oblige you," Rachel Sprague answered, with a little laugh.

Abner Styles shook his head. "I know you too well, Miss Rachel," he said, confidently. "You couldn't like a person, just to oblige your best friend."

Rachel Sprague bowed. "You are right," she said; "my likings are necessities of my nature."

Some months later, when Shelby was full of summer importations, and a crowd of men passed the Sprague cottage on their way to the morning train, Abner Styles said to the man at his side: "Vredenburg, there's such a rare woman lives there!"

His eye was running over the Sprague cottage with an eager look of search. Dr. Vredenburg had often remarked that Abner Styles never passed the house without that look. He replied, in answer to his companion's remark, "I have met Miss Sprague."

Without any actual disparagement in the words, Dr. Vredenburg's remark was like cold water on the enthusiasm expressed in his companion's tones. Abner Styles glanced with a half-combative look at the Doctor, but there was a tap on the window-pane, and he turned suddenly toward Maple Cottage.

The door opened, and there came tripping down the walk a woman worthy of the enthusiasm in Abner Styles's remark—"Such a rare woman!"

She was simply dressed—only a black, trailing skirt, a lapelled jacket, a wealth of black hair tied back with a bright ribbon, a jeweled pin at her throat, and a single jeweled ring on her finger—but the effect on Dr. Vredenburg was that this woman's attire was befitting the Queen of Sheba. She had a high, noble forehead and bright, passionate eyes; but Dr. Vredenburg thought the forehead wrinkled and the eyes lost somewhat of their brightness at

sight of him; and he stood by somewhat awkward and uncomfortable while she gave a commission to Abner Styles for books in the city.

"How is your mother, Miss Rachel?" Abner Styles inquired.

"She is not so well," Rachel Sprague replied, sadly. "Her weakness alarms me."

"You ought to try our Doctor here, Miss Rachel," Abner Styles said, laying his hand on Dr. Vredenburg's shoulder.

"When Dr. Ward merits our dissatisfaction we will," Rachel Sprague replied, with dignity.

It was the "Queen of Sheba manner," Dr. Vredenburg thought, and he responded quickly, with a flush creeping up to his temples, "Dr. Ward suits you much better than I could hope to. You are quite right."

"Quite right!" Rachel Sprague said to herself as the men moved down the street, and she walked slowly and meditatively up the stone walk. "Quite right! He thinks I am altogether wrong. They have quite spoiled him here in Shelby, making a god of him. I can't abide spoiled men."

The subject of her thoughts, as profoundly meditative as herself, found his reverie broken in upon by Abner Styles as they hastened to the morning train. "She's a rare woman, Miss Rachel is," he said, earnestly.

"Yes," Dr. Vredenburg responded, thinking to himself it was a better world for the rarity.

"She's a reader and a writer," Abner Styles went on to say. "And a better daughter you never saw. With the world full of miserable wives it's a shame for her to live unmarried. The heart of her husband would safely trust in her."

"Yes," Dr. Vredenburg assented, and this time cordially. The woman was too proud to betray a trust, he thought. "I doubt if women like Rachel Sprague ever make happy married women," he added, meditatively. "They are self-sufficient, and hold a hand to play the game of life alone."

Abner Styles shook his head decidedly. "Rachel Sprague can no more play the game of life successfully without a partner than you can, Vredenburg," he answered, earnestly.

Dr. Vredenburg frowned at that reference to himself, and his eyes grew sad with regret or longing.

"You look like a man on the brink of a euchre now," Abner Styles said, laughing. "I tell you, man, it's a losing game for you and Miss Rachel too. You ought to be good friends."

"It took a man with Solomon's wealth and position to interest the Queen of Sheba," Dr. Vredenburg answered, with some sarcasm in his tone.

"Queen of Sheba!" laughed Abner Styles. "She is more like Rachel of the Bible—a woman to be served for seven years. We read that the term of service seemed to Jacob only a few days for the love he had to her. I tell you

Rachel Sprague is a woman to inspire love and pay for service like that."

"Miss Sprague has a chivalric defender in you," Dr. Vredenburg remarked, and then the subject dropped.

Dr. Vredenburg strolled into Abner Styles's parlors one night at a late hour. Dr. Vredenburg could not often be accused of strolling. In general there never was a walk that was more full of the execution of a deliberate intention than his; but that night his steps loitered—he walked like one whose will only half consented to his movements, and in front of Abner Styles's little cottage he even paced backward and forward a number of times, as if his will's consent was given and withdrawn. Dr. Vredenburg never went to his daily work with such reluctant step, and it was a sorry face for a man in search of pleasure. And yet that was what the men and women were seeking who entered Abner Styles's parlors that night. The host had done his part. There was music, some flowers, gas blazing to the fullest capacity of country gas, and a table overflowing with luxuries that are a party's necessities. What he had not done, he and his wife, brim-full of kind intention and honest good-nature, stood prepared to do to the best of their knowledge. Dr. Vredenburg attracted their attention when he came strolling in, after the guests were all assembled.

"I thought you were never coming!" exclaimed Mary Styles, "and I was getting very angry and out of patience with you. Come over here and see Miss Sprague."

Dr. Vredenburg had seen her. In his glance around the room he could not fail to see the stately woman in the trailing black silk dress, corals in her hair, and lace like cobwebs at her throat. If he had never called her Queen of Sheba before he would have given her the sobriquet that night.

"Yes, come and see Miss Sprague," Abner Styles repeated.

"Oh no!" Dr. Vredenburg remonstrated. To himself he said—not for the world. "I see Miss De Ruyter over yonder. I will join her," he added, aloud.

Agnes De Ruyter smiled to see Dr. Vredenburg coming to her. True he was a plain and hard-working man; but he was exceedingly respectable, and quite a god among the Shelby people, as Rachel Sprague said. Next to wealth, Agnes De Ruyter bowed to popularity. "The voice of the people is the voice of common-sense," she would say sometimes in a high-sounding way; "and I pride myself on my common-sense notions."

"I wonder who the delicate man is over by the door," Agnes De Ruyter said to Dr. Vredenburg that night at Abner Styles's party, after a mutual exchange of chit-chat on the times and weather. The large diamond in his shirt-front did not betoken a dilapidated fortune, and she had already labeled him mentally, "*Genus*, Summer Importation; *Species*, Invalid."

Dr. Vredenburg looked in the direction designated and bowed. "He is a new-comer at the hotel, a Mr. Rothmeyer. He called to see me to-day," he answered.

"He looks like a man with one foot in the grave," Agnes De Ruyter said.

"Oh no!" Dr. Vredenburg replied. "He is a tenacious man. He will not die without a pretty hard struggle for life, and his chances of regaining his health are pretty good."

"I should say he was a gentleman," Agnes De Ruyter commented.

"Unmistakably," Dr. Vredenburg answered. "He is a traveler and a scholar. He is coming this way; I will introduce you."

Mr. Rothmeyer's manner was easy, perhaps a trifle condescending, and his glance about the room was certainly critical, with no attempt at disguise. "The young lady in black is Miss Sprague, I believe," he remarked, after a few minutes' conversation.

"Yes," responded Agnes De Ruyter. "Do you think her fine-looking?"

"A trifle too tall, is she not?" Mr. Rothmeyer asked, carelessly.

"She is not so tall as I," Agnes De Ruyter said, with a pout.

Mr. Rothmeyer seemed to survey Agnes De Ruyter for the first time. "I beg your pardon," he said; "I thought her the tallest lady I ever saw."

"It must be her dress," Agnes De Ruyter said, in a puzzled way.

"Yes, I think so," Dr. Vredenburg remarked. "She dresses a great deal."

"But she has on a plain black silk, and this young lady wears lavender, which is much more dressy," Mr. Rothmeyer replied, turning to Agnes De Ruyter.

"Is it?" Dr. Vredenburg asked, innocently. "I am sure I don't know, but Miss Sprague always appears to me more dressed than any body else."

"Oh no! She don't wear any thing but simple muslins and alpacas and dark silks," Agnes De Ruyter replied. "There are plenty of girls here in Shelby who dress much more than Miss Sprague. I wonder she hasn't married," Agnes De Ruyter continued, in a musing way that was characteristic of her. "She isn't very young, and has evidently seen much of society. Probably she had opportunities before their circumstances were reduced."

"The right one hasn't come along, I suppose," Dr. Vredenburg replied.

"Or the right one feared there might not be room enough in the house for him with such a wife," Mr. Rothmeyer remarked, as if nothing had impressed him so much as her size.

Agnes De Ruyter pouted. Evidently Mr. Rothmeyer's preference was for small women. She went on talking of Rachel Sprague. It was safe to do so, inasmuch as Mr. Rothmeyer did not like her. "She is very much the fashion here in Shelby. It is wonderful how many people ape her doings and quote her sayings. I

have about made up my mind to cultivate her myself."

"Ah!" was the involuntary comment of both gentlemen. Dr. Vredenburg was getting weary of Agnes De Ruyter; he always did, he confessed to himself; and Mr. Rothmeyer was smiling at the condescension in the woman's tone. If he was any judge of human nature, Miss Sprague wasn't the sort of person to be cultivated at pleasure by a girl like Miss De Ruyter.

He was correct in his judgment, for toward the close of the evening Agnes De Ruyter said to Rachel Sprague, in a confidently secure way, "I intend having a little *musicale* next week. You must be sure to come."

"Thank you," Rachel Sprague answered. "But my mother is an invalid, and I seldom spend an evening away, except with old friends."

She passed on, and Agnes De Ruyter bit her lips. "Very exclusive!" she commented, sarcastically. "I think Miss Sprague is putting on airs."

The gentlemen made no audible comment; but Mr. Rothmeyer was thinking he could have predicated such a result to Miss De Ruyter's cultivation, and Dr. Vredenburg pronounced the manner worthy of the Queen of Sheba.

Rachel Sprague sang before all the guests had left that night—sang, in a clear, ringing soprano, a simple song of longing for the days of childhood. Such songs are always sad as sung by men and women.

As the last notes died away Mr. Rothmeyer said, turning to Agnes De Ruyter, "Get that woman to come to your *musicale* by hook or by crook. Her voice is worth a score of ordinary voices."

Dr. Vredenburg had not moved, standing against the mantle with bowed head and firm-set lips. He had forgotten the Queen of Sheba as he listened. There was no pride in the woman's tones. They were soft with the wailing cry of weary womanhood, and hinted of a life not sufficient for its needs. He went home thinking of the song still. It had stirred a responsive chord in his own breast, for sometimes, as on that night, Dr. Vredenburg half acknowledged to himself that his life of toil and sacrifice was not sufficient to satisfy the cravings of a hungry heart, and with the remembrance of days long past, before his life had learned its lack, he took up that woman's cry:

"Make me a child again, just for to-night."

Dr. Vredenburg never accused Rachel Sprague of self-sufficiency again. His heart interpreted too faithfully the manner of her song-singing on that night to repeat the accusation.

Rachel Sprague was at Agnes De Ruyter's *musicale*. Dr. Vredenburg could hardly believe his eyes when she entered with Mr. Rothmeyer. "I was right in saying the man was tenacious," he thought. "Miss Sprague's presence is a proof."



After this Dr. Vredenburg often saw Mr. Rothmeyer at the Sprague cottage. In his journeys past he frequently received a bow from the delicate, well-dressed man going in or out, and there was always an eager gladness on the face going in, and content on the outgoing face. "I fancy he has forgotten that there might not be room enough in the house for him with such a wife," he would say to himself, and then he would fall to thinking of his own cheerless home and somewhat dreary life.

There was a pelting rain in New York one day that summer, and Dr. Vredenburg hastened through it to catch the evening train to Shelby. It was a fearful storm; but Dr. Vredenburg did not heed, for he was strong to bear, he said to himself, in the conscious pride of manhood, contrasting himself with a slender, half-drenched female who hastened in the same direction. And then he was a prudent man, who had provided himself with thick boots and umbrella; and this woman, with the imprudence natural to her sex, wore thin shoes and had no umbrella. He was thinking of an inevitable doctor's bill as he passed the woman, when she glanced up suddenly, and as suddenly he halted.

"Miss Sprague!" he exclaimed, and then he remembered that he had seen her on board the train that morning, and had said to himself that the Queen of Sheba was going to the city for dry-goods to make her look more than ever like a queen. But that water-soaked woman, trudging along in pools of water, was not quite so much a queen; and he said, holding the umbrella over her head, "You are not going to Shelby to-night?"

"I certainly am," was the decided answer.

Dr. Vredenburg did not heed the "Queen of Sheba manner." "If you have friends in the city I would advise you to stay overnight," he urged.

"I have friends in the city; but I prefer to go to Shelby," was the decided rejoinder.

"Then you must consent to come under my umbrella and take my arm," Dr. Vredenburg said, coolly. "An unpardonable assumption of authority on my part, perhaps," the Doctor thought afterward; "but had she been a thousand times the Queen of Sheba," he said to himself, "I would have done it, for her health, and perhaps her life, was at stake."

Rachel Sprague hesitated. She had never been gracious to this man. He was dictatorial and unjust and spoiled; but— She looked up in his face to object, and then she took his arm. "There was no use contradicting a man with that look on his face," she said, in self-justification, afterward. "I believe he would have stood in the street all day, or taken me up in his arms and carried me. He stood there my master, and I obeyed like a child."

She was mistaken. She obeyed like a woman recognizing afar off the law that makes the man head over the wife.

Rachel Sprague was too polite not to be gracious now, and the ride to Shelby was full

of pleasant chat. Dr. Vredenburg forgot that the woman at his side was other than an interesting and wondrously well-informed companion; but the next Sunday, when he met her elegant in rustling silk and cashmere shawl, he dubbed her Queen of Sheba again, and there was no authority in his manner.

The authority asserted itself in his face and tones when he stood by the bedside of Rachel Sprague's mother to consult with Dr. Ward in a severe case of congestion that threatened the life of the sufferer. He was a skillful man—not unworthy of his popularity in Shelby; and now he bent all his energies to combat with the fierce disease. "It was his way," the Shelby people said.

The next morning Rachel Sprague said to Dr. Vredenburg: "It is my wish that you attend my mother hereafter."

Dr. Vredenburg bowed. This woman was doing him justice at last.

He came to mete out full justice to her when he knew her as Abner Styles did, the faithful daughter and cultivated woman. Going from the Sprague cottage, beautiful in its elegant simplicity, to his own cheerless home, he often thought of the blessedness of that man's life who should win Rachel Sprague. Would Rothmeyer's life have that blessedness? He had returned to the city now vastly improved in health. Dr. Vredenburg wondered what hopes he had borne away for the future. He was a tenacious man. He was sure to return.

And he did. One night when Dr. Vredenburg measured powders in Mrs. Sprague's room the servant brought Rachel Sprague a card. She gave a quick exclamation of surprise, and turned to Dr. Vredenburg.

"You remarked when you came in that my face was flushed like fever," she said.

"Yes," he answered, wonderingly.

"Will you prescribe rest and quiet for me?" she asked.

"I do," he replied, wondering still.

"Will you tell the gentleman in the parlor you have done so?" she inquired, entreatingly.

Dr. Vredenburg hesitated. He was not a man to do this woman's bidding unquestioningly.

"I do not want to hear what this man has come to say," she explained, in a nervous and hesitating manner.

"I had rather die than say to a woman what she might not wish to hear. I will tell him," Dr. Vredenburg answered.

He went down into the parlor and met Mr. Rothmeyer.

"Shelby air is not doing your mother the good you anticipated. I advise a change," Dr. Vredenburg said to Rachel Sprague a few weeks later. He did not say this without effort. The night before Dr. Vredenburg had held communing with himself. He had gone over a life full of sacrifice and toil—so full that long ago he had given up, perhaps forever, as he said then, the hope of gaining love and wife.

He thought over his seven years' life in Shelby. Seven years—the time that served for Rachel! He thought of Rachel Sprague, and pronounced her, as Abner Styles had, worthy of the patriarch's term of service. Then he looked around his home, simple, inelegant, and very humble, and contrasted it with the luxury this woman's life had known aforetime, and would know again, mated to a man like Mr. Rothmeyer. He contrasted himself with Mr. Rothmeyer—a man of polish and rare education. His life's hard labor had debarred him from cultivation like this man's, and he had never known the advantages of travel and society. He remembered that Rachel Sprague had not wished to hear what Mr. Rothmeyer came to say. Neither would she wish to hear what was in his heart that night to say. He put away his dream and took a new lease of his bachelorhood, for he had said he would rather die than say to a woman what she might not wish to hear. Ah! he was like Jacob. He had missed of Rachel.

Rachel Sprague heard Dr. Vredenburg's suggestion of a change of residence with a surprised and startled face, but after the next week Shelby knew the Spragues no more.

"It's an odd thing how some people are always crossing your path," Agnes De Ruyter said, one morning, standing at the window of a fashionable house in the city, and watching the passers-by. Agnes was not in a good humor that morning. In the first place, it was a raw, damp morning, like that other, more than a year ago, when she had stood in the window at Shelby and watched Rachel Sprague go by; and, in the second place, she was annoyed thinking of the voice she had heard in the choir of a city church the night before.

"I knew it was Rachel Sprague's before it had sung a bar," she said. "I would know the voice any where. Not that it is a voice to rave about, as some did in Shelby, but it is peculiar and distinctive. And there, across the church, was Mr. Rothmeyer, who came to Shelby for his health. The Rothmeyer ladies wore velvet and diamonds. If I get an opportunity I shall cultivate them. But Rachel Sprague!" she broke out again, as if her mind reverted painfully to her as a haunting subject; "it's an odd thing that I should run foul of her the first thing when I come to the city. I never fancied her in the least. She put on airs, and was very ambitious."

"Why do you stand shilly-shallying at the window when you ought to be dressing?" interposed her mother. "Rachel Sprague and her singing are nothing to you."

Agnes de Ruyter wondered if they were nothing to her, remembering that Dr. Vredenburg had never been the same man after Rachel Sprague left Shelby.

*Apropos* of her thought, Mrs. De Ruyter said: "Your father met Dr. Vredenburg in the street this morning and invited him to dinner. The Doctor is down to the city on important business."

"I wonder what the business is?" Agnes De Ruyter mused.

"Perhaps it is you," suggested her mother.

Agnes De Ruyter shook her head. "Nonsense!" she said, pettishly. "Dr. Vredenburg has no interest in me."

"And if he had?" suggested her mother.

"You would be Dr. Vredenburg's mother-in-law," Agnes replied, with a little malice in her speech, for Dr. Vredenburg was a bone of contention in the De Ruyter family. He was the only man without wealth and station that Agnes ever would tolerate, Mrs. De Ruyter would say, in a grieved tone. She did not understand it at all.

Agnes De Ruyter stood under the gas-light that night attired to go out. She held in her hand a little piece of paper on which she recognized Dr. Vredenburg's writing.

"December 16th," she read.

"That was day before yesterday," she commented, and proceeded to read from a little memorandum:

"Called at Abner Styles's, ostensibly for herbs, but really to make inquiries concerning—"

Agnes De Ruyter paused, for two initial letters were so blotted that she could not make them out. She read on:

"I have resolved to stake all and win or lose. I shall go to New York on Monday. Our steps are directed by the Lord."

Agnes De Ruyter folded the paper. "I will give it to him at the concert to-night," she said. "He promised to be there."

"What a dead earnest face!" A lady whispered the comment to Rachel Sprague, sitting in the choir of a city church where a sacred concert was given for the benefit of a benevolent institution.

Rachel Sprague glanced to the pew where was the earnest face, and a change swept over hers.

"Do you know him?" asked her companion.

"Your face lighted up with a sudden glory."

Rachel Sprague put out the glory in an instant, and answered, calmly, "I have seen the face before—not for many months, however."

"It isn't a young face, or a captivating one," the girl went on to say. "It isn't half so fascinating as Mr. Rothmeyer's."

Rachel Sprague frowned. "Hush!" she said.

"He will hear you;" for Mr. Rothmeyer sat at a little distance watching her.

Rachel Sprague sang her part in the oratorio of the "Messiah." Her voice trembled unwontedly at the first, but ere she finished the notes of praise rang out clear and swelling like a jubilee.

"It was well done, Miss Sprague," the leader of the concert said, approvingly, as they took their seats. "Your singing is an inspiration sometimes."

The face that Rachel Sprague's companion had called "dead earnest" was turned toward the choir while they sang. It took in all the singers, but lingered longest on Rachel Sprague's

and Mr. Rothmeyer's. "She is not looking well," he said; "and he is tenacious, as I said."

He entered the choir while a duet was sung, and the singers made way for him. He came like one with authority, they said.

Rachel Sprague acknowledged the authority, for when she recognized Dr. Vredenburg she gave him a seat by her side, and waited with the surprised and startled look her face had worn when he had suggested her departure from Shelby.

Dr. Vredenburg did not keep her waiting long. He had sought her with intent to speak his mind, and he was not a prudent man to study time and place.

Leaning on his arm to shield her from the gaze of the singers, he said, "I once told you I would rather die than say to a woman what she might not wish to hear. I run the risk of saying unwelcome words to you."

The surprise went out of Rachel Sprague's face, and left it white, and grave, and full of womanly tenderness. "Your words are not unwelcome," she said.

"*Wife* comprehends them all," he said.

The singers came and went, but Rachel Sprague sat like one who heard not, her face profoundly thoughtful, and her eyes full of the light of love and happiness. Dr. Vredenburg, catching the look, was answered before the reply came, low and sweet, "*Husband* comprehends my answer."

Agnes De Ruyter saw Rachel Sprague and Dr. Vredenburg passing out of the church. There was no mistaking the man's right or the woman's proud acknowledgment of it. She comprehended the business that had brought Dr. Vredenburg to the city, and said, "Without doubt the blotted initials were R. S. He has staked all and won. He was sure to."

Agnes de Ruyter made a new classification of friends about this time. She put Rachel Sprague and Dr. Vredenburg among married people, uninteresting and incomprehensible; and Mr. Rothmeyer she placed among her eligible friends.

Years after she changed his place again, and wrote him husband. "To think that after all I should marry a summer importation who came down to Shelby for his health," she said, with a smile that was more than half dissatisfied.

Dr. Vredenburg, over the news of that marriage, exclaimed, "Poor Rothmeyer! When I took Rachel there was left to him only Laban's second daughter."

## SHIPWRECK OF THE "GENERAL GRANT."

ON the 28th of November, 1865, the ship *General Grant*, Captain William H. Loughlin, sailed from Boston for Melbourne. A fine westerly breeze urged her cheerily along, and the crew, of which the narrator was one, began the voyage in good spirits. During the second night out a heavy gale struck us, and

while shortening sail the third mate, Rufus S. Tyler, was lost overboard. This ill omen was followed by good weather, which took us in sixty-eight days to the Cape of Good Hope.

Bad weather vexed us thence to Melbourne, which we reached on the 13th of March, 1866.

We remained in Melbourne about eight weeks, loading for London. By one of those coincidences which sailors dread we took aboard part of a cargo that had been intended for the steamer *London*. This ill-fated vessel had sunk in the Bay of Biscay on her voyage out, and there were many gloomy prophecies that no freight of hers would reach London in any ship. The rats are also said to have left our vessel. Our cargo consisted chiefly of wool and hides, with about four thousand ounces of gold. We sailed on Friday the 4th of May, 1866, with sixty passengers, among whom were six women and about twenty children. The men were nearly all miners, returning home with their families and what property they had acquired at the diggings. The crew numbered twenty-three—four officers and nineteen men.

The Auckland Isles are a group of black basaltic rocks, lying about 1500 miles south-east of Melbourne, and 199 south of New Zealand. They are barren and uninhabited. Whalers and sealers occasionally visit them, and have left a stock of pigs and a few crazy huts. Many vessels have been cast away there, and an abundance of wreck-wood may be found on the shores. Captain Musgrave, of the schooner *Grafton*, was wrecked there in 1864, and remained eighteen months. He left a substantial hut, and at his instance the Government of New Zealand put goats, sheep, and domestic fowls ashore there, and planted English elms, oaks, and ash-trees. Nothing thrived but the goats. Papers were also left giving the bearings of New Zealand and other useful information; but these seem never to have been found.

For five days the *General Grant* made good progress with a fair wind. The Captain had originally intended running to the northward of the Aucklands; but on the seventh day a southeasterly breeze sprang up, obliging him to beat to windward.

Heavy fog closed in, and a sharp look-out was kept for land. The last observation was taken that morning. Throughout the next two days the weather was so thick that we could scarcely see the end of the jib-boom from the deck. At 10½ o'clock at night of the ninth day the look-out forward cried, "Land on the port bow." This was Disappointment Island, the most westerly of the Auckland group. The Captain immediately tacked ship and ran to the northward of Disappointment. When fairly clear of the land, which he supposed to be the most northerly of the Aucklands, instead of the most westerly, the wind shifted from southeast to northwest.

All danger seemed past. The yards were squared and the doomed ship put on the straight