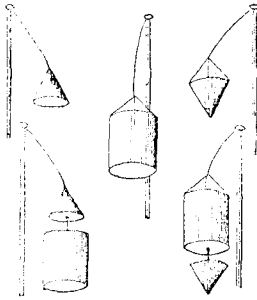


probable direction of the wind in an approaching storm. Thus: cone point upward to the right of the staff—northerly gale; cone point downward to the left of the staff—southerly gale; cylinder above—expect dangerous winds from both quarters successively; upright cone above cylinder—dangerous wind expected from the north; reversed cone below cylinder—dangerous wind expected from the south; and so on.

It took some time to inspire the British sailor with confidence in the storm signals of Admiral Fitzroy, but in 1864 it was found



ADMIRAL FITZROY'S SIGNALS.

in England that 50 per cent. of the storm warnings had proved correct, and in 1865 that 73 per cent. had been verified. In France, during the year 1865, seventy-one warnings were realized, and seventy-six in the following year; 89 per cent. of the storms which occurred were signaled in the first winter, and 94 per cent. during the second. The North German *Seewarte* mentions that out of the storm warnings hoisted at Hamburg in a given period 94 per cent. were correct. The forecasts of the weather are derived in Europe more largely than in the United States from local observations, and less relatively from observed movements at distant points. The extent of territory of the United States is peculiarly favorable in allowing the movements of a storm to be traced from point to point, and to be anticipated in regions to which it is trending. The United States mariner has not alone the benefit of observations and deductions from local instruments, but also of predictions from the head-quarters of the government service, derived from the tri-daily reports of all the atmospheric conditions at widely separated points of observation, taken at the same instant of absolute time—observatory time at Washington. As a storm from the Gulf or the Northwest drifts into the area of observation, its course, force, and extent are obtained from collation of the data from various points, and the time of its arrival at any point within its sweep is fore-announced with substantial accuracy.

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HELEN.

MISS LAURESTON was standing at her study window in brown-study. She was an elderly lady of some forty years, with handsome, severe features, and a figure so straight that it seemed never to have tubed since the days of babyhood. The room, with its sombre tints, was handsome and dignified like its owner, its floor soft with dark Smyrna carpets, and its walls imposing with row upon row of soberly bound volumes. The distant fire-light executed a sort of witches' dance over the dark foreground and the motionless figure at the window. It was Christmas night through the world, and a robin's snow was falling softly outside.

Miss Laureston watched the snow-flakes dropping silently into the circle of faint light, until the gathering darkness changed the glass to a mirror which showed her nothing but a tall ghostly form answering to her own. She looked at this form curiously at first, and then uneasily. Even as it stood between her and the outer world, and set before her eyes the room that lay behind her, so it seemed to stand between her and the onward-coming life, and to set before her thoughts the life that lay behind her.

It was a large, lonely house she lived in, with no friends, no guests, no Christmas cheer. She remembered another house, many miles away, that used to be lighted from top to bottom when Christmas came round. And on dark winter nights the glass used to throw back another figure beside her own—a delicate girlish figure that was sometimes laughing, sometimes crying, sometimes merry, sometimes reproachful, but in all its myriad moods never other than loving and innocent—the figure of her young sister. And in all the world no stranger was less likely to know of its present abiding-place than she herself this Christmas night.

Camilla—Milly—Milly Laureston. The name was in her thoughts oftener to-night than it had been on her lips for twelve long years. One picture came back very brightly: the old homestead, with its quaint sloping roof, from whose highest window one could see the spire of the village church, and hear the noon bell when the day was still. It was on one of those still days that she had taken the little one from the arms that folded it so quietly, and carried it to her own room, knowing that she at ten and Milly at two were both alone in the world.

Alone, except for an old uncle, who, hearing of his sister-in-law's death, came back to settle himself at the homestead, and to give to the two children a care more affectionate than wise during the few remaining years of his life.

From the first, Agnes was his favorite. He was an infirm man, withdrawn from all the active affairs of life, and with something of the old alchemist's spirit in his blood; most happy when left undisturbed to his library and his laboratory. Miss Laureston remembered as if it were but yesterday that weird room fitted up under the sloping eaves, with the pale blue light from the spirit-lamps shining over retorts and mysterious bottles. The curious noises and explosions never terrified her as they did her sister. While Milly would throw her apron over her head, and hide in the farthest corner of the house, she would creep up the attic stairs, and, with her face pressed close to the laboratory door, would listen in breathless expectation for the next developments from within. One day her uncle found her there, and after that the mysterious room was made free to her, though prohibited to the rest of the household. She never disarranged his implements or meddled with his dangerous reagents. No mouse could be quieter than she was, or more unlike a child. With her noiseless ways, her love of books, her dislike of every thing that was not decorous and quiet, her hatred of weakness and demonstration, she grew into the old man's life just in proportion as she grew farther away from her sister's.

Milly was a little hoiden, laughing, pouting, crying, caressing, all in one breath. As a child, she could not be trusted in the neighborhood of any thing that was breakable; and her pranks were as countless as they were troublesome to her grave elder sister and uncle. As a maiden, she was full of caprice, hated gloominess, and filled the house with young companions after her own sunshiny heart. Agnes was patient with her, but it was the patience of a superior being for an inferior. Mr. Laureston was kind to both his nieces, but he treated Milly as a troublesome child, Agnes as a valued confidante. The years that lessened the practical difference in the ages of the two girls only increased this unconscious difference of treatment. He died when Milly was fifteen, and never guessed what a silent, uncomplaining, though childish, longing for love was springing up in the heart of his younger niece with her growing womanhood.

Agnes was at that time twenty-three, and considering the difference in the ages of the two sisters, as well as his own limited knowledge of the character of one of them, he was perhaps justified in leaving his property as he did. Almost every thing was given over into the hands of Agnes. She was made the guardian of her young sister. A small sum was to belong unconditionally to Milly when she came of age. The remainder of the large estate was settled upon Agnes, leaving it to her judgment and generosity what part of it her sister was to inherit.

Miss Laureston thought of all this, walking restlessly up and down the room, and struggling with the dumb pain that filled her heart. She knew that she had fulfilled that trust conscientiously. She had at once resolved to give Milly half the property on her majority, and had devoted her life to the fitting of her sister for the responsible station she was to occupy.

Never was a kitten more unwilling to be trained than was Milly Laureston. She would not study; she could not be made to walk sedately or to behave herself properly at home or abroad. When she was scolded, she would cry like a baby; when she was petted, she would flush and brighten, and some new piece of mischief would dance into her eyes. Every thing frightened her, from a mouse to a ghost, and grave talk only made her hide her face and run away.

Agnes was strong, calm, and self-repressed. A caress from her was a sign of the deepest emotion, and when Milly begged for them constantly, and told her with tears that she did not love her because of the want of them, she only smiled and tried to have patience with her sister's weakness. In all this she was ignorant of the pain she was giving, or of the childish heart that was longing so passionately to be loved in its own way.

She was ignorant of it this Christmas night, and did not know why the look that used often to be on Milly's face, like that of a child in pain, should haunt her so bitterly. The lonely room, the lonely house, the lonely life, out of which that face with its shining hair had gone twelve years ago—these were all that remained to her to-night.

Milly had left her, had run away from home, leaving no clew by which to trace her. They afterward ascertained that she was married to a strolling actor, Paul Gessner, whom Miss Laureston would have disdained to receive among her servants—a disreputable foreigner who had found his way to Milly's heart by a handsome face and a soft, caressing manner.

Agnes took up her life again as best she could, sternly resolving that it should not be broken by the fault of another. She sold the old homestead, and looked around for another home. A cousin who had been an old school friend, and who was married now, wrote from a distant town begging her to make her home with them. This she would not do; but feeling even in her self-isolation some need of human friendship, she bought the house she now occupied, and which was only a short distance from her cousin's, and moved there in less than a month after her sister's marriage. Here she had lived for twelve years, and here she was growing old.

Her cousin had two children—a boy of five, and a little girl younger still; but the baby face of the little one bore some shad-

owy resemblance to her sister's, and she shrunk from seeing it. Harry was more of a favorite, and soon contrived to make himself very much at home in Aunt Agnes's sombre house.

As Miss Laureston brought her thoughts down to this point, she remembered that to-morrow was Christmas, and that this young gentleman probably had unlimited expectations from her liberality on that occasion. Breaking away from her thoughts, she sent for the old nurse, who had come with her to her new home, and had never been absent from her a week at a time since her babyhood.

"Nurse, has any thing been done for Harry? I forgot all about him, and he will be disappointed if he does not get something to-morrow."

"He won't be disappointed, Miss Agnes," said the old woman, a comical look flitting over her rugged face—"leastwise, not unless he's very unreasonable. If you'll just have lights, so as to make it a bit more cheerful for you, I'll show you some little things out here in the hall closet."

Miss Laureston rang for the lights, and then stepped out into the hall and peered curiously into the dim closet in search of the "little things."

She held up her hands in dismay. It was a perfect store-room of child's playthings, all jumbled together in utter confusion. Sleds, kites, hoops, balls, toy villages, diminutive fire-engines, picture-books, trumpets suggestive of dire sounds, and bright jackknives suggestive of still direr results—playthings with and without name, enough to supply a regiment of children, met her astonished eyes.

"Nurse, nurse," she exclaimed, "what are we going to do with all these things? Why, there will be nothing left to give him all the rest of his days! Kites and hoops in the winter! And there—yes, that is certainly a doll and a doll's house!"

"For Master Harry's little sister these things are," interposed the old woman.

Miss Laureston stopped short in sudden confusion; she had forgotten the existence of the little girl.

"To be sure," she said, hurriedly; "you were quite right, nurse. I have been too much occupied to think about it. But Harry can not have all these things. Here are enough to fill a toy-shop."

"No, Miss Agnes; but I thought, perhaps, after you'd taken all you wanted for the children, you'd like to send the others to those Caxtons that live down near the village. They are as poor as poor can be, and the house is just packed with children. I don't expect they even know what Christmas means."

For the second time Miss Laureston blushed with self-reproach.

"What a selfish, unfeeling person I am!" she mentally ejaculated. "My very servants have more thought for the poor than I."

She turned slowly back to the library, saying, "Yes, nurse; send them any thing you please. And put in a chicken or two with the other things."

The fire-light and lamp-light together made the room look very cheerful as she closed the door behind her and shut out the world. But Miss Laureston's thoughts were any thing but cheerful.

"A lonely old woman," she was saying to herself, "forgetting every body, and forgotten by every body. That is what I shall be soon. Not a soul the better or happier because I am in the world. I wonder," she thought, confusedly, "whether I have not made a mistake somewhere? There must be a way to people's hearts, but I don't know how to take it; I don't remember that I ever cared to know."

"Did she care now?" she asked herself, with a vague uneasiness growing out of her thoughts about her sister. She was not quite sure, but she remembered that Milly used to care. Milly used to be fond of children too. Perhaps if she were to take a little child home— But at this point she roused herself, and tried to shake off her fancies. What love of children had she, or understanding of them, to fit her for such a responsibility? "The child would fear me," she thought, dreadingly, "just as Milly used to. I must even go my own way till I am old."

She walked up and down the room once or twice, and at last stopped before a large picture that rested on an easel. It was a beautiful engraving of the head of the Angel Gabriel, by Delaroche. The exquisite outline, the wonderful meekness and purity of the bent head, moved her as they had never done before. The saintliness that encompassed it touched her life with a feeling of comfort. She returned to it several times during the long lonely evening, and after she fell asleep, had a curious dream concerning it.

She thought she was walking along a very rough and stony road, carrying a little child in her arms. A thick darkness was around her, so that she continually stumbled and fell. As she went on some one came softly up behind, and she looked round and saw the Angel Gabriel by the faint light which shone around his head. He held in his hand a trumpet which he raised to his lips, but instead of sound blew from it light—a broad and brilliant radiance that illumined the whole landscape. Being in her sleep without fear of him, she asked, "Do you light my path because I have this child in my arms?"

"Yes," he answered. "As long as you carry that child, you shall have light wherever you go."

After that the dream grew indistinct, and gradually faded away in deeper sleep.

The next day was clear and pleasant, with a light snow only an inch or two deep covering the ground. About noon she remembered Harry, and began to wonder whether he would make her a Christmas call or not.

That was the precise point which Master Harry himself, perched on an old stone wall not many rods away, was anxious to settle; for he was strictly forbidden to go to Aunt Agnes's house that morning, Mrs. Gaston, knowing his propensity to demand presents, having proved obdurate to his most pathetic coaxings. As far as the turn in the road where the stone wall ended he might go, and no farther. Was ever such a Tantalus restriction devised before? for there in sight were the very chimneys down which he was sure Santa Claus had swooped the night before. He was not quite sure that it was not his solemn duty to go and divide the spoils, on the principle of a law of nature superseding an artificial one; but as his conscience was uncomfortably active, he compromised the matter by resolving to stay where he was—as long as the snow lasted.

The snow was rapidly disappearing, but delightful hoards of it still lurked in the cool crannies of the wall. While he was down on his knees busily unearthing a specially fine deposit, two hands suddenly appeared over the top of the wall, and a little girl miraculously dropped into the road at his side. She was muffled up in coarse wrappings, and came down on her feet like a gigantic snow-ball.

Harry stared at her a moment or two, and then he got up and stared at the wall. But it was a very thick and high one, far above his head, and he could see nothing at all; only he fancied he heard a faint rustling, as if a snake were slipping away among the dead leaves on the other side. When the sound died away he turned his attention to his new comrade. She was a tiny little creature, shivering with the cold, and half sobbing with fright and sleepiness. When Harry touched her she stopped crying, and looked at him out of a pair of big blue eyes.

"You is not as pretty as my little sister," said Harry, after a critical inspection of her eyes, nose, and mouth. "Who's your mamma?" he demanded, receiving no answer to this remark. "Is you Santa Claus's little girl, and did he drop you here for a Christmas present?"

Still no answer, but the same wondering look.

"It's perlite to answer when people speaks to you, mamma says."

Finding that this hint was not taken, he offered to initiate her into the mystery of making snow-balls, in the hope that this

might loosen her tongue. The child seemed to understand this language, for she laughed gleefully, and the two soon established a very satisfactory copartnership in mud and snow.

But by-and-by prudence suggested to Harry that he should beat a retreat in one direction or the other, for very soon mamma would be sending to look for him. He looked at his companion, and seeing what a little creature she was, a dim sense of masculine responsibility concerning her began to enter his mind.

"Are you a-coming to visit my mamma?" he asked, doubtfully. Then a bright thought popped into his head, a delightful reconciliation of duty and interest. "You's a-going to see Aunt Agnes," he proclaimed, decisively. "I'll go and show you the way, 'cause you's too little to go alone. Mamma will be very glad if I doesn't let you go alone."

The child stood still, looking at him with the same questioning blue eyes.

"Mamma will be *very* glad," repeated Harry, with dignity, holding out his hand.

She put her little fat one into it, and he led her toward the house with sparkling eyes.

"I will tell Aunt Agnes you's a present from Santa Claus, and then p'r'aps—p'r'aps she'll say he left a present for me too."

But though the house was in sight, they did not get over the road very fast; the tiny feet of Harry's little Christmas present were hardly used to walking on smooth floors; they stumbled very uncertainly through the clinging mud left by the melting of the snow. He had fairly to drag her up the broad front steps at last. This accomplished with some difficulty, he marched straight to the library to find Aunt Agnes, still pulling her along by the hand, and pushed open the door without ceremony.

Seldom had two dirtier children invaded a well-ordered room than the two who met Miss Laureston's astonished eyes as she looked up from her book. Harry dropped the child's hand and ran up to her.

"Aunt Agnes, you said you did want a little boy one time when I come to see you. I couldn't find any little boy, 'cause they all have mammas; but I found a little girl, and she's a Christmas present for you, auntie, from Santa Claus."

Miss Laureston looked in bewilderment from her nephew as he calmly appropriated and presented his treasure-trove to the little stranger he had left standing near the door. Such a baby as she looked, and so forlorn, standing there all alone in that great room, with both tiny hands clinging to a chair, and her eyes half closing from sheer weariness. Something woke up in Miss Laureston's heart that had never been there before, and she hastily crossed the room and lifted the child in her arms, mud-

dy dress and all. As she did so, her eyes rested upon the picture of the Angel Gabriel, and a sudden thrill went through her at the remembrance of her dream. The child went quietly to sleep without even looking to see who held her, and Miss Laureston studied the baby face so close to her own with a curious mixture of uncertainty and satisfaction.

"Harry," she said, "come here and tell me who this little girl is."

But Harry, having caught a glimpse of nurse in the hall, had already stolen out of the room, with a prophetic inkling of the things to be revealed in that closet.

Miss Laureston waited patiently for an hour, still holding the sleeping child in her arms, till her nephew again made his appearance, with sundry hoops, steam-engines, and carts bouncing after him. Then she repeated her inquiry: "Who is this little girl?"

"I don' know," said Harry. "She comed over the wall all of a sudden; two hands dropped her down in the road. I guess it was Santa Claus."

When Miss Laureston came fully to understand the facts of Harry's marvellous story, there was a commotion in the great house. Servants were sent right and left to discover the owner of the child her nephew had abducted. The stone wall, the neighboring woods, all the country round, were searched, but all to no purpose. The little girl wore coarse clothes, not unlike those of the children of poor families, and tied around her neck was a handkerchief of somewhat finer quality, having on it the name Camilla E. Beckwith.

The old nurse was the first to discover the name, and showed it to her mistress, with some hesitation, remembering the other Camilla, who was Milly Gessner now, and never Milly Laureston again.

Miss Laureston just glanced at it, and turned away her head.

"Take it away, nurse," she said, wearily, "and ask Mr. Adams to call here as soon as he can make it convenient. I want to consult him about the best way of advertising for the child's friends. This name will be of some help."

Mr. Adams was her lawyer; he made his appearance that afternoon, and was soon put in possession of the whole story, as far as any body knew it. But when she came to the name a sudden look of intelligence flashed over his face.

"Camilla Beckwith, you said? There was no other mark found upon any of her clothing?"

"None that we could discover."

"And the clothes were coarse like those worn by poor people?"

"All except the handkerchief, which was of fine quality."

"Then I suppose that I can tell you her parentage, Miss Laureston; but I fear it will not be of much use in solving the question what is to be done with her." To his surprise something very like pleasure came into the eyes of his companion at this last remark. He waited a moment, but as she gave no explanation of it, he went on: "You doubtless are acquainted with the fact that suicides are unfortunately not uncommon among the poor at this time of the year, when the cold weather causes increased destitution?"

Miss Laureston started, and then asked, "Are the child's parents dead? Did either of them—"

Mr. Adams answered the question as if she had finished it. "Yes; the woman I believe to be the mother of the child was found drowned in the river last night. Her body was taken to the morgue, and on it were several articles of clothing marked with that same name—Camilla Beckwith. She was, moreover, identified with a woman who has been lurking round this neighborhood for several days, having with her a child like the one you describe. Doubtless with some notion of providing for its safety, she dropped it down beside your nephew in the curious manner he reported before going away to carry out her own desperate plan."

"Drowned! On Christmas night!" repeated Miss Laureston, in a low, oppressed voice. "The very night of all others that the world is full of happiness!"

"It was very sad. If she had made her poverty known, help would have been given her without doubt."

Miss Laureston was silent. Across her decorous, quiet, well-ordered life flashed the vision of this suffering woman, to whom no help was so welcome as the help that came from the dark river. She felt almost suffocated, as if from a bodily feeling of the pressure of human suffering. It was the first time any pain but her own had ever come so near to her. It was the first time she, whose whole ideal of life was proud strength, had ever felt pity for despairing weakness. In the midst of her confused thoughts a conviction crept through her that this new anguish of pity, this strong yearning over the motherless child, was the first ray of the visionary light that should lighten her path.

"My Helen—my Light!" she repeated, softly, to herself, with a sudden resolve to call the baby Helen, because of its beautiful meaning. She did not even say to herself that she would adopt her, so completely did she seem to belong to her and to no other in all the world.

"May I not see the little girl?" asked Mr. Adams, breaking in upon her reflections. "I should like to see if she resembles her mother."

Miss Laureston colored, hesitated, and at last ordered the child to be brought in. The reason of her hesitation became manifest a minute later. The gentleman, who was expecting to see a little waif wrapped in coarse clothes, or at best the cast-off garments of charity, almost rubbed his eyes with amazement when the nurse came, bringing in her arms a tiny dimpled maiden arrayed in the whitest of white dresses, delicate sash, and bronze shoes, and set her down by the side of the mistress. Most wonderful of all, there was Miss Laureston herself, the strictest and most unbending of dignified ladies, actually stooping over the child to caress its short silky curls as it clung to her knees, with a look as if she had forgotten every one else in the room but the baby whose face she had never seen till two short days ago.

Mr. Adams put on a resigned look, and tried to remember that he was dealing with a woman. Miss Laureston presently remembered that *she* was dealing with a man, and tried to give her mind to business. A sudden doubt chilled her whether, after all, she was free to keep her treasure.

"Is it not possible that the child may have other friends—besides the mother?" she asked, hesitatingly.

"It is possible, of course. But I think in that case the woman would have left it with them, since she evidently did not wish it to perish with herself. Besides, judging by what we know of the mother's history, it would hardly be a benefit to the little girl to give her over to such relatives, if they exist, nor is it likely that they would have any desire or ability to take care of her. She will be much better off in some orphan asylum."

Miss Laureston looked up indignantly, but was appeased by the twinkle in the lawyer's eyes that accompanied these last words.

"No orphan asylum will ever have her," she said, taking up the child, who commenced to tug at her bracelet. The deluded woman immediately took it off, and surrendered the costly plaything into the baby hands, to be mauled as it might suit them.

"She's welcome to every thing already, I see," remarked Mr. Adams, with another twinkle.

"She is welcome to every thing I have in the world," said Miss Laureston, with such evident sincerity that his politeness hardly kept him from a surprised whistle.

"Wonder what they'll think of this over at Gaston's," he thought: "those two children might have come in for the property if this one hadn't turned up." Then, aloud, and with all deference, he inquired, "What is the name of the little lady? I presume you have already had her christened."

"Not christened yet," said Miss Laureston, laughing, "but named. Her name is Helen."

This she said with as much assurance as if the name had been a fact of ten years' standing, instead of ten minutes', in her thoughts.

"Then, little Miss Helen, will you shake hands with a new friend, who is an old friend of your—"

"Of her aunt's," said Miss Laureston, composedly. "Shake hands with the gentleman, Helen."

As if she understood, the child stretched out a tiny hand; but when he offered to take her in his arms, she pulled away with a little cooing laugh, and hid her face on her new aunt's shoulder.

The color flushed all over Miss Laureston's face with delight, while she pretended to scold Helen for her shyness. Long years afterward, she used to say that Helen would never once leave her of her own free-will to go to any one else all the days of her babyhood, and that she believed it would almost have broken her heart if she had done so. The child was happy and contented with many other people as long as Aunt Agnes was not in the room, but when she was, nobody would answer but this same Aunt Agnes. If any body else offered to take her, she always had refuge in the same pretty trick of turning her back on the suppliant, and peering out at him from behind Miss Laureston's head.

Mr. Adams was mistaken in one of his surmises. Kind, generous Mrs. Gaston never troubled herself about the possible disposition of her cousin's money, but she did feel a little astonished, and not a little hurt, to think that her own baby girl had always been unnoticed, while Miss Laureston was so ready to take this stranger to her home and her heart.

But then there was Harry; he had found the mysterious way to Aunt Agnes's heart—a fact which nobody knew better than the young gentleman himself. Mrs. Gaston thought of Harry, and thought of the lonely life her cousin had led, and she was not able to keep any harsher resentment than a slight coldness of manner toward the tiny princess who had so suddenly come to her kingdom.

Meanwhile Miss Laureston gave herself over wholly to the strong affection that colored her sober, elderly life with something of the lost grace of youth. She certainly loved Harry, but she almost idolized Helen. The very faults of the child were beautiful in her sight, and no purple and fine linen was too costly to be lavished upon her.

Helen soon learned to talk plainly, to run about easily, and to get into mischief more easily. It took the whole corps of servants to watch her, and there were not many nooks in the dark stately house out of which her dimpled face, with its flushed cheeks and its soft rings of shining hair, did not peep sooner or later.

When night came Miss Laureston would carry her to the library, where the fire-light shone on the head of the Angel Gabriel, and rock her softly to sleep, while all the flickering light of the room seemed to gather and rest tenderly upon the baby form.

Once, when she had laid her in her crib and was sitting alone, still humming softly to herself the old cradle song she had been singing to Helen, a sudden vision came to her of the years that were gone and the life that could never be recalled—her sister's life and her own. The love that she showered upon the child up stairs—how much of it had she showed to her young sister? The kisses that were rained upon Helen's face—could she not remember the time when Milly had pleaded for only one, and reproached her that she never gave it voluntarily? Could she not remember how the tears had dropped one by one over Milly's face when she told her, very gently indeed, that she was fanciful and unreasonable in doubting her love because it could not take that childish form? Did she think it childish now, when Helen's little hand was laid against her lips? and did the God who sent loving, child-like hearts into the world mean that they should be left to wear themselves out with pain because they were not schooled in the self-contained dignity of calmer natures?

For the second time the lesson appointed to her, the light that was to light her path, came in pain, came at the hands of the child she had named Helen, the light of her life. From that day Miss Laureston learned to distrust herself. Remembering her own childhood, it made her uneasy to see Helen grave even for a moment, or turning from her play to books. It pleased her best when the child was busiest at mischief and every corner of the dim rooms echoed with her laughter, so that she was fairly in danger of being left to grow up in ignorance, if Miss Laureston's common-sense had not finally come to the rescue. She was eager that Harry should spend much of every day at her house, in order that Helen might have some one of her own age to play with. And when the two had succeeded in devising any specially unheard-of prank, the cheerfulness with which she went round inspecting damages was an indescribable exasperation to the unlucky servant who had to restore order.

The two children grew up inseparable in all their plays, having only one chronic bone of dispute between them—for Harry would not own that Helen was as pretty as his sister. The little lady felt herself greatly aggrieved at such uncomplimentary speeches, and always retorted by leaving him to himself, and running away to find Aunt Agnes. Harry soon found wisdom to be the better part of valor, and compromised his principles for his

comfort in the most unheroic manner by admitting that his playmate might some time be almost as pretty as Kitty, Providence permitting.

But this was not till the young lady was twelve years old, and Master Harry considered himself to have arrived at years of discretion. They had many a pitched battle before that time, but generally agreed to a truce the first pleasant day afterward. In rainy weather they took the great garret for a field of operations, and Miss Laureston never suspected that Milly's picture, so many years forgotten, was dragged out by their childish fingers, and with some difficulty restored to a perpendicular position. They named it "the pretty lady," and Helen dusted it off with her white dress. Afterward they often pretended that it was alive, and the silent, sweet face of "the pretty lady" was made a sharer in many of their impromptu plays. As she grew up, Helen, in her more quiet moods, used often to slip away and sit for hours facing the portrait, weaving her own quaint fancies in this unknown presence.

When she was fifteen, and was beginning to put on the shy, delicate ways of young womanhood, Miss Laureston was nearing what the world calls old age. And when, as often now, she realized this, and saw the whiteness on her hair, and knew that the one dear love which made her able to meet old age gladly and peacefully was the love that came to her that Christmas night to be the light of her life, she had no words for the blessings that her heart poured out on Helen's head, no words for the penitence and humility that filled her when she thought of her sister. These twenty-five years had passed without sign from Milly, and she did not now believe her to be alive. But with a longing desire for atonement, she sometimes tried to find her way into the hearts and lives of the poor. The sense that she failed in this was the only failure that greatly troubled her. For those she tried to benefit gave her gratitude and gladness, and even a distant, respectful affection, but she never knew how to find the way to their natural, spontaneous love, and they never knew how to show it.

At fifty-five a nature can not be wholly changed, if indeed it ever can. Miss Laureston did not understand that there were uses for all kinds of natures, and she was painfully trying to change her own to a model it never could have fitted. Her youthful fault had lain, not in being reserved and undemonstrative, but in expecting every one else to be so too; and now she was making the opposite mistake of refusing her own character any place or usefulness in the world.

But whoever else misunderstood her, Helen never did so, or was other than fearless

in the presence of the love that had sheltered her from all the storms of life. It occurred to the girl one day to ask Miss Laureston about the picture in the garret, and why it was not hung down stairs. In all those fifteen years she had never put a question about it before, for it was so completely a part of her childhood that it seemed never to have had any other history or any name.

Miss Laureston had forgotten the existence of the picture, and was struck with a keen remorse. She at once ordered it to be brought down stairs and hung in a place of honor, at the same time giving Helen the outline of her sister's story.

It was a bright sunny day in late October that the picture was rehung, and the clear eyes of Milly Laureston looked down upon the home life as they had done long ago. Miss Laureston was late at breakfast that morning, and Helen, while waiting for her, went up to the picture and stood before it in an idle attitude very much like that of the figure before her. While so gazing, and having forgotten all about breakfast, she was startled by a sharp cry behind her, and looked round to see her aunt, white and trembling, standing in the doorway and looking from her to the picture in a bewildered way that was wholly unaccountable. She called the girl Milly first, and then Helen, and seemed not to know in whose presence she stood; but when Helen would have hurried to her, she begged her to remain where she was. So she stood still, rather frightened, while Miss Laureston looked at the marvellous likeness before her. Line for line, feature for feature, Helen's face and the pictured face were exactly the same. The ages, too, were nearly alike, and no stranger would have doubted that the young girl standing in front of it was the original of the portrait.

Miss Laureston was so shaken that she was unable to think or reason, but she knew in her inmost heart that such a likeness could not be accidental. If Helen was not Milly's child, she must be in some way related to the family, and have drawn her face from the same distant ancestor who had bequeathed it to Milly Laureston. It was hours before she recovered her calmness, and then her first step was to send for the lawyer. To him she showed the likeness, and to him she committed the charge of making every possible search for the relatives or friends of the woman, supposed to be Helen's mother, who had died in so sad a way. She also recalled to his memory the fact that the name on the handkerchief—Camilla—was the same as her sister's, and that the article was of different quality from the rest of the child's clothing.

"You told me, too, that the woman was dark, and in feature wholly unlike Helen, did you not?" she added.

"H'm, yes," said Mr. Adams, as he took in the suggestions of the strange story—"yes, I said so, certainly; but this likeness may be wholly accidental. And there will be great difficulty in finding proof at this distance of time."

Miss Laureston was silent; she felt convinced that the likeness was not an accidental one.

"In fact, there is only one way," continued Mr. Adams—"to put the matter into the hands of private detectives. And I fear that will be very unpleasant to you."

Miss Laureston winced, but gave orders that it should be done immediately.

The next month passed like a dream. Her feeling of the unreality of all that surrounded her, her dread of yielding up Helen to another, waged incessant war with her love for her sister. At times she almost dreaded to find Milly, because she might have a better right than herself to the love of her treasure; at other times she bitterly reproached herself with selfishness and hardness; at all times she was conscious that something, some revolutionary change in her life, was coming to meet her with steady tread, and she could neither evade nor resist it.

At last, one frosty night, a little, dark, alert man, with eyes like an eagle's, presented himself at her door, and she knew that he was a detective, and that he had come with news. It was very quickly told, the story that she had been dreading so long. Mrs. Camilla Beckwith was alive, and was now residing in a town about eighty miles distant. Previous to her second marriage she had been a Mrs. Gessner. Her husband had died in the tenth year of their married life, leaving her with no children and in extreme poverty. Afterward she had married Mr. Beckwith, who had befriended her in her poverty, and who was a gentleman nearly twice her own age, of good means and standing. By him she had one child, which, before it was two years old, had been stolen from her by a sister of her former husband, who had always been violently jealous of the second marriage, and was believed to have been insane. At the same time her husband fell ill with his last sickness, and in the sorrow and confusion of his death speedy search could not at once be made for the child. It was afterward ascertained that the woman had drowned herself, and they never doubted that the little girl perished with her, knowing the hatred she had borne to the child's father. The one passion of her life had been her handsome, dissolute brother Paul, and after his death she had set herself bitterly against the marriage of his widow with any other man. Mrs. Beckwith, the detective added, had been sick for a long time, but finally recovered, and was now leading a quiet, retired life, greatly re-

spected and beloved by the whole neighborhood.

Such, in substance, was the detective's story; and if he knew more than this, if he knew Mrs. Gessner's name before her first marriage, or guessed whose child Miss Helen Laureston really was, he gave no sign of it.

After his departure Miss Laureston sat and thought in sore bewilderment. Not as to her duty, for that was clear; it was to go at once to her sister, and take Helen with her. But that Milly, little Milly, the baby, the willful child, should have gone through such an experience, while her older sister was watching one uneventful year add itself to another in the old quiet house, seemed to her a thing incredible. She had been twice married, she had had a child of her own, and had tried all the depths of bereavement and anguish, and perhaps also its strange strength, for did not the man say that "she was greatly beloved and respected by all who knew her?"

How the words repeated themselves over in Miss Laureston's brain that night, and refused to harmonize with any of her recollections of that lost sister, little Milly, who had been always the weak one, to be taught and protected! And yet the weakness of the one had gone out to battle with many sorrows, while the strength of the other had been left to learn in silence and in safety the lessons of life. In her bewilderment Miss Laureston almost forgot her pain at the thought that any one else had a claim upon Helen.

But morning came, and with it the need of action. She told Helen as gently as possible the story of her life and this late discovery of her mother. It comforted her not a little when the child clung to her and refused to leave her even for the sake of the unknown mother, who was to her only a dream.

In order to reach the town where Milly lived they had to leave home by an early train and travel all day. Miss Laureston held Helen's hand fast in hers when the train rolled into the station after that silent journey. In her confusion she had neglected to find out from the detective exactly where Mrs. Beckwith lived, and though she knew the street, she did not know the house.

It was a quiet country town, so peaceful under the last light of the setting sun that the trouble unconsciously slipped from her heart as they walked together up the elm-bordered street. But she still kept Helen's hand in hers, and did not let it go even when they saw the name they had come to find, and turned up into the shady street where Milly lived.

"Now we must ask where Mrs. Beckwith lives, auntie," said Helen, her voice trembling in spite of her. "These seem to be

houses of poor people along here. Shall we stop at one of them, or go further on?"

"Stop here, Helen," said Miss Laureston, eagerly. "They will not notice us as other people would."

So they went up to the nearest house, a very humble cottage, and asked a rough-looking man who sat smoking a pipe at the door if he knew where Mrs. Beckwith lived.

"Mrs. Beckwith?" repeated the man, slowly—"do I know where Mrs. Beckwith lives? Just you step in here, mistress, a minute."

Miss Laureston hesitated; but Helen had noticed the glow that shone over the man's stolid face, and drew her on.

When they were inside the rude door, the man lifted a sort of curtain which was the only separation between that and an inner room.

"Just you look here, mistress," he said, again; and following his motions, they saw a little boy, fearfully deformed, who could not have been more than seven years old, lying on a low bed. His restless hand was grasping at some flowers that lay scattered on his breast, and, in strange contrast with the poor house, a lovely Madonna looked down upon the suffering child.

The man's hand shook a little as he grasped the curtain. "It's all her doings—the posies and the other things," he whispered hoarsely, not to disturb the boy. "Me and wife can't count the nights that she's sat here when the boy were wild wi' the pain; an' the saints knew it were as good for him to look at her face as the holy face up there," crossing himself as he looked up at the Madonna.

"Do you mean Mrs. Beckwith?" asked Helen, for her aunt did not speak.

"Sure, who else could I mean? There's not her like here in the whole country round. The widow Reilly, that's next door, knows it too, for her boy and girl ran wild till Mrs. Beckwith found them, and just dressed them up and sent them off to school. There's never a house in all the town, if trouble comes in at the door, that the dear lady doesn't follow hard after. Does I know Mrs. Beckwith? Our Lady up there knows her, if I don't"—with another look at the picture.

"There, there, the mistress only wants to know where Mrs. Beckwith lives," interposed his wife, soothingly.

The man dropped the curtain and turned away, still muttering to himself, while she followed them to the door and told them how far to go and what houses they must pass before they came to Mrs. Beckwith's.

They had no trouble in finding it; it was a large quiet house, deeply set among the trees. They waited a few minutes in the dim parlor, and a lady came softly in through the door. A lady with silvered hair, in a silver-gray dress, with the sober-

ness of age lightly resting on her like a blessing. Could that be the child Milly? Miss Laureston stood in silence before her, while Mrs. Beckwith looked from the young girl to the elderly white-haired lady who held her hand so closely.

With their youth far behind them, and twenty-five years crowding in between them, Agnes and Milly Laureston were face to face again. And the calm strength of the one bowed down before the patient humility of the other. "Beloved and respected by all?" It was so, indeed; toil and poverty and pain had borne witness to it. The child's weakness had grown into the woman's strength, the child's folly to the woman's wisdom. "Milly, Milly," whispered Agnes, and felt her sister's arms round her neck before the words left her lips.

Only one prayer had Milly—to be forgiven for the wrong she did in leaving her sister; only one feeling, when the long story was told and her lost child given back to her—a gratitude and blessing for her sister that all loving words and caresses failed to make known.

Yet even with Milly's hands clasping hers, Miss Laureston's eyes wandered constantly to Helen, and all her thoughts were trembling round the fear that Milly would take Helen away from her.

"You will come and live with me now, Milly, will you not?" she asked at last, putting the question with intense dread; for if her sister said No, would it not be natural that she should expect her daughter to stay with her?

Mrs. Beckwith looked up and saw two anxious faces—the sister's she had left, and the daughter's she had never known—waiting for her answer; saw and understood that they were more to each other than she could be to either of them. Her lips quivered a little as she asked, wistfully, "Are you afraid I shall want to take your little girl away from you? I will go with you, Agnes, any where that you wish. I was wrong when I would not stay with you before, and now I will try to make up for it."

She raised her face to kiss her sister, sober, middle-aged lady that she was, in the very same humble way that she used to do in her childhood, and Agnes understood a little of the love that must go out before love of others can come in.

But she never understood in all her life the simple self-sacrifice with which Milly gave her child over to the sister whose life was in her, and consented to go to the home where she would take only a second place, as in the days of her girlhood, and could be first in the heart neither of sister nor child. Milly only said to herself how natural it was that they should love each other best, and took the pain into her own heart rather than throw a shadow of it upon them.

Miss Laureston and Helen staid with her for several weeks, and when they went home, she went with them. In that time something of the strangeness which separated them had worn away. The old house received them back to itself, and the picture of the Angel Gabriel watched over its happy Christmas as it had watched over the lonely one fifteen years ago. On dark nights, when the fire-light shone brightly, the window again threw back the figures of the two sisters, the one white-haired, the other gray-haired, both going down to old age peacefully, while that young and beloved life climbed the morning slopes beside them.

Harry was away at college now, and now and then looked at Helen's picture as if he might some time come to think it prettier than any other face in the world; but before that time came, his child-sister had fallen asleep with the immortal beauty on her face, and left to Harry and Helen only a dear memory sacred forever from all rivalry of earthly loveliness.

CRIME AND TRAMPS.

THOSE who seek to check crime, to make life and property safe, and to secure the rule of good morals, must study with care the causes of the lower grades of offenses. They are the most frequent, most hurtful from their numbers, and the most difficult to control. Vagrancy, petty thefts, and disorders lead to murders, arson, and robbery. When crime reaches these proportions an aroused community usually searches out and punishes the offenders. For this class of criminals our laws are well enough, and are fairly enforced. The great trouble is to work out some system which shall check the course of those who are entering upon lives of disorderly and criminal aspects, and who have been guilty of petty breaches of the law. To do this we must rely in the first place upon the exercise of our religious, moral, and social duties; and in the next place upon the laws we frame to punish this class of wrong-doers.

I shall only speak at this time of the laws of our State—what they are, and what they should be. A class of men known as "tramps" has suddenly sprung up in great numbers, and we are at a loss in what way to deal with them. We feel that they are a great and growing danger. They make life and property unsafe in parts of our country which have heretofore been free from such evils. Not only our towns, but the solitary homes of our farmers are annoyed by these visitors, who mean to live upon the community either by beggary or theft. This dangerous class not only increases in number, but it is rapidly gaining a kind of organization, and is growing into a system of