

ANNIE KILBURN.*

BY WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS.

XXV.

THE bell on the orthodox church called the members of Mr. Peck's society together for the business meeting with the same plangent, lacerant note that summoned them to worship on Sundays. Among those who crowded the house were many who had not been there before, and seldom in any place of the kind. There were admirers of Putney: workmen of rebellious repute and of advanced opinions on social and religious questions; nonsuited plaintiffs and defendants of shady record, for whom he had at one time or another done what he could. A good number of the summer folk from South Hatboro' were present, with the expectation of something dramatic, which every one felt, and every one hid with the discipline that subdues the outside of life in a New England town to a decorous passivity.

At the appointed time Mr. Peck rose to open the meeting with prayer; then, as if nothing unusual were likely to come before it, he declared it ready to proceed to business. Some people who had been gathering in the vestibule during his prayer came in; and the electric globes, which had been recently hung above the pulpit and on the front of the gallery in substitution of the old gas chandelier, shed their moony glare upon a house in which few places were vacant. Mr. Gerrish, sitting erect and solemn beside his wife in their pew, shared with the minister and Putney the tacit interest of the audience.

He permitted the transaction of several minor affairs, and Mr. Peck, as Moderator, conducted the business with his habitual exactness and effect of far-off impersonality. The people waited with exemplary patience, and Putney, who lounged in one corner of his pew, gave no more sign of excitement, with his chin sunk in his rumpled shirt front, than his sad-faced wife at the other end of the seat.

Mr. Gerrish rose, with the air of rising in his own good time, and said, with dry pomp, "Mr. Moderator, I have prepared a resolution, which I will ask you to read to this meeting."

He held up a paper as he spoke, and

then passed it to the minister, who opened and read it:

"Whereas, It is indispensable to the prosperity and well-being of any and every organization, and especially of a Christian church, that the teachings of its minister be in accord with the convictions of a majority of its members upon vital questions of eternal interest, with the end and aim of securing the greatest efficiency of that body in the community, as an example and a shining light before men to guide their steps in the strait and narrow path; therefore

"Resolved, That a committee of this society be appointed to inquire if such is the case in the instance of the Rev. Julius W. Peck, and be instructed to report upon the same."

A satisfied expectation expressed itself in the silence that followed the reading of the paper, whatever pain and shame were mixed with the satisfaction. If the contempt of kindly usage shown in offering such a resolution without warning or private notice to the minister shocked many by its brutality, still it was satisfactory to find that Mr. Gerrish had intended to seize the first chance of airing his grievance, as everybody had said he would do.

Mr. Peck looked up from the paper and across the intervening pews at Mr. Gerrish. "Do I understand that you move the adoption of this resolution?"

"Why, certainly, sir," said Mr. Gerrish, with an accent of supercilious surprise.

"You did not say so," said the minister, gently. "Does any one second Brother Gerrish's motion?"

A murmur of amusement followed Mr. Peck's reminder to Mr. Gerrish, and an ironical voice called out,

"Mr. Moderator!"

"Mr. Putney."

"I think it important that the sense of the meeting should be taken on the question the resolution raises. I therefore second the motion for its adoption."

Putney sat down, and the murmur now broadened into something like a general laugh, hushed as with a sudden sense of the impropriety.

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Mr. Gerrish had gradually sunk into his seat, but now he rose again, and when the minister formally announced the motion before the meeting, he called, sharply, "Mr. Moderator!"

"Brother Gerrish," responded the minister, in recognition.

"I wish to offer a few remarks in support of the resolution which I have had the honor—the duty, I *would* say—of laying before this meeting." He jerked his head forward at the last word, and slid the fingers of his right hand into the breast of his coat like an orator, and stood very straight. "I have no desire, sir, to make this the occasion of a personal question between myself and my pastor. But, sir, the question has been forced upon me against my will and my—my consent; and I was obliged on the last ensuing Sabbath, when I sat in this place, to enter my public protest against it.

"Sir, I came into this community a poor boy, without a penny in my pocket, and unaided and alone and by my own exertions I have built up one of the business interests of the place. I will not stoop to boast of the part I have taken in the prosperity of this place; but I will say that no public object has been wanting—that my support has not been wanting—from the first proposition to concrete the sidewalks of this village to the introduction of city water-works and an improved system of drainage, and—er—electric lighting. So much for my standing in a public capacity! As for my business capacity, I would gladly let that speak for itself, if that capacity had not been turned in the sanctuary itself against the personal reputation which every man holds dearer than life itself, and which has had a deadly blow aimed at it through that—that very capacity. Sir, I have established in this town a business which I may humbly say that in no other place of the same numerical size throughout the commonwealth will you find another establishment so nearly corresponding to the wants and the—er—facilities of a great city. In no other establishment in a place of the same importance will you find the interests and the demands and the necessities of the whole community so carefully considered. In no other—"

Putney got upon his feet and called out, "Mr. Moderator, will Brother Gerrish allow me to ask him a single question?"

Mr. Peck put the request, and Mr. Ger-

rish involuntarily made a pause, in which Putney pursued:

"My question is simply this: doesn't Brother Gerrish think it would help us to get at the business in hand sooner if he would print the rest of his advertisement in the *Hatboro' Register*?"

A laugh broke out all over the house as Putney dropped back into his seat. Mr. Gerrish stood apparently undaunted.

"I will attend to you presently, sir," he said, with a school-masterly authority which made an impression in his favor with some. "And I thank the gentleman," he continued, turning again to address the minister, "for recalling me from a side issue. As he acknowledges in the suggestion which he intended to wound my feelings, but I can assure him that my self-respect is beyond the reach of slurs and innuendoes; I care little for them; I care not what quarter they originate from, or have their—their origin; and still less when they spring from a source notoriously incompetent and unworthy to command the respect of this community, which has abused all its privileges and trampled the forbearance of its fellow-citizens under foot, until it has become a—a byword in this place, sir."

Putney sprang up again with, "Mr. Moderator—"

"No, sir! no, sir!" pursued Gerrish; "I will not submit to your interruptions. I have the floor, and I intend to keep it. I intend to challenge a full and fearless scrutiny of my motives in this matter, and I intend to probe those motives in others. Why do we find, sir, on the one side of this question as its most active exponent a man outside of the church in organizing a force within this society to antagonize the most cherished convictions of that church? We do not asperse his motives; but we ask if these motives coincide with the relations which a Christian minister should sustain to his flock as expressed in the resolution which I have had the privilege to offer, more in sorrow than in anger."

Putney made some starts to rise, but quelled himself, and finally sank back with an air of ironical patience. Gerrish's personalities had turned public sentiment in his favor. Colonel Marvin came over to Putney's pew and shook hands with him before sitting down by his side. He began to talk with him in whisper while Gerrish went on:

"But on the other hand, sir, what do we see? I will not allude to myself in this connection, but I am well aware, sir, that I represent a large and growing majority of this church in the stand I have taken. We are tired, sir—and I say it to you openly, sir, what has been bruited about in secret long enough—of having what I may call a one-sided gospel preached in this church and from this pulpit. We enter our protest against the neglect of very essential elements of Christianity—not to say *the* essential—the representation of Christ as—a—a spirit as well as a life. Understand me, sir, we do not object, neither I nor any of those who agree with me, to the preaching of Christ as a life. That is all very well in its place, and it is the wish of every true Christian to conform and adapt his own life as far as—as circumstances will permit of. But when I come to this sanctuary, and *they* come, Sabbath after Sabbath, and hear nothing said of my Redeemer as a—means of salvation, and nothing of Him crucified; and when I find the precious promises of the gospel ignored and neglected continually and—and all the time, and each discourse from yonder pulpit filled up with generalities—glittering generalities, as has been well said by another—in relation to and connection with mere conduct, I am disappointed, sir, and dissatisfied, and I feel to protest against that line of—of preaching. During the last six months, Sabbath after Sabbath, I have listened in vain for the ministrations of the plain gospel and the tenets under which we have been blessed as a church and as—a—people. Instead of this I have heard, as I have said—and I repeat it without fear of contradiction—nothing but one-idea appeals and mere moralizings upon duty to others, which a child and the veriest tyro could not fail therein; and I have culminated—or rather it has been culminated to me—in a covert attack upon my private affairs and my way of conducting my private business in a manner which I could not overlook. For that reason, and for the reasons which I have recapitulated—and I challenge the closest scrutiny—I felt it my duty to enter my public protest and to leave this sanctuary, where I have worshipped ever since it was erected, with my family. And I now urge the adoption of the foregoing resolution because I believe that your usefulness has come to an end to

the vast majority of the constituent members of this church; and—and that is all."

Mr. Gerrish stopped so abruptly that Putney, who was engaged in talk with Colonel Marvin, looked up with a startled air, too late to secure the floor. Mr. Peck recognized Mr. Gates, who stood with his wrists caught in either hand across his middle, and looked round with a quizzical glance before he began to speak. Putney lifted his hand in playful threatening toward Colonel Marvin, who got away from him with a face of noiseless laughter, and went and joined Mr. Wilmington where he sat with his wife, who entered into the talk between the men.

"Mr. Moderator," said Gates, "I don't know as I expected to take part in this debate; but you can't always tell what's going to happen to you, even if you're only a member of the church by marriage, as you might say. I presume, though, that I have a right to speak in a meeting like this, because I *am* a member of the society in my own right, and I've got its interests at heart as much as any one. I don't know but what I got the interests of Hatboro' at heart too, but I can't be certain; sometimes you can't; sometimes you think you've got the common good in view, and you come to look a little closer and you find it's the uncommon good; that is to say, it's not so much the public weal you're after as what it is the private weal. But that's neither here nor there. I haven't got anything to say against identifying yourself with things in general; I don't know but what it's a good way; all is, it's apt to make you think you're personally attacked when nobody is meant in particular. I think that's what's partly the matter with Brother Gerrish here. I heard that sermon, and I didn't suppose there was anything in it to hurt any one especially; and I was considerably surprised to see that Mr. Gerrish seemed to take it to himself, somehow, and worry over it; but I didn't really know just what the trouble was till he explained here to-night. All I was thinking was when it come to that about large commerce devouring the small—sort of lean and fat kine—I wished Jordan & Marsh could hear that, or Stewart's in New York, or Wanamaker's in Philadelphia. I never *thought* of Brother Gerrish once; and I don't presume one out of a hundred did either. I—" The electric light im-

mediately over Gates's head began to hiss and sputter, and to suffer the sort of syncope which overtakes electric lights at such times, and to leave the house in darkness. Gates waited, standing, till it revived, and then added: "I guess I hain't got anything more to say, Mr. Moderator. If I had it's gone from me now. I'm more used to speaking by kerosene, and I always lose my breath when an electric light begins that way."

Putney was on his legs in good time now, and secured recognition before Mr. Wilmington, who made an effort to catch the moderator's eye. Gates had put the meeting in good-humored expectation of what they might now have from Putney. They liked Gates's points very well, but they hoped from Putney something more cruel and unsparing, and the greater part of those present must have shared his impatience with Mr. Wilmington's request that he would give way to him for a moment. Yet they all probably felt the same curiosity about what was going forward, for it was plain that Mr. Wilmington and Colonel Marvin were conniving at the same point. Marvin had now gone to Mr. Gerrish, and had slipped into the pew beside him with the same sort of hand-shake he had given Putney.

"Will my friend Mr. Putney give way to me for a moment?" asked Mr. Wilmington.

"I don't see why I should do that," said Putney.

"I assure him that I will not abuse his courtesy, and that I will yield the floor to him at any moment."

Putney hesitated a moment, and then, with the contented laugh of one who securely bides his time, said, "Go ahead."

"It is simply this," said Mr. Wilmington, with a certain formal neatness of speech: "The point has been touched by the last speaker, which I think suggested itself to all who heard the remarks of Brother Gerrish in support of his resolution, and the point is simply this—whether he has not misapplied the words of the discourse by which he felt himself aggrieved, and whether he has not given them a particular bearing foreign to the intention of their author. If, as I believe, this is the case, the whole matter can be easily settled by a private conference between the parties, and we can be saved the public appearance of disagreement in our society. And I would now ask

Brother Gerrish, in behalf of many who take this view with me, whether he will not consent to reconsider the matter, and whether, in order to arrive at the end proposed, he will not, for the present at least, withdraw the resolution he has offered?"

Mr. Wilmington sat down amidst a general sensation, which was heightened by Putney's failure to anticipate any action on Gerrish's part. Gerrish rapidly finished something he was saying to Colonel Marvin, and then half rose, and said, "Mr. Moderator, I withdraw my resolution—for the time being, and—for the present, sir," and sat down again.

"Mr. Moderator," Putney called, sharply, from his place, "this is altogether unparliamentary. That resolution is properly before the meeting. Its adoption has been moved and seconded, and it cannot be withdrawn without leave granted by a vote of the meeting. I wish to discuss the resolution in all its bearings, and I think there are a great many present who share with me a desire to know how far it represents the sense of this society. I don't mean as to the supposed personal reflections which it was intended to punish; that is a very small matter, and as compared with the other questions involved, of no consequence whatever." Putney tossed his head with insolent pleasure in his contempt of Gerrish. His nostrils swelled, and he closed his little jaws with a firmness that made his heavy black mustache hang down below the corners of his chin. He went on with a wicked twinkle in his eye, and a look all round to see that people were waiting to take his next point. "I judge my old friend Brother Gerrish by myself. My old friend Gerrish cares no more really about personal allusions than I do. What he really had at heart in offering his resolution was not any supposed attack upon himself or his shop from the pulpit of this church. He cared no more for that than I should care for a reference to my notorious habits. These are things that we feel may be safely left to the judgment, the charitable judgment, of the community, which will be equally merciful to the man who devours widows' houses and to the man who 'puts an enemy in his mouth to steal away his brains.'"

"Mr. Moderator," said Colonel Marvin, getting upon his feet.

"No, sir!" shouted Putney, fiercely; "I can't allow you to speak. Wait till I get

done!" He stopped, and then said, gently: "Excuse me, Colonel; I really must go on. I'm speaking now in behalf of Brother Gerrish, and he doesn't like to have the speaking on his side interrupted."

"Oh, all right," said Colonel Marvin, amiably; "go on."

"What my old friend William Gerrish really designed in offering that resolution was to bring into question the kind of Christianity which has been preached in this place by our pastor—the one-sided gospel, as he aptly called it—and what he and I want to get at is the opinion of the society on that question. Has the gospel preached to us here been one-sided or hasn't it? Brother Gerrish says it has, and Brother Gerrish, as I understand, doesn't change his mind on that point, if he does on any, in asking to withdraw his resolution. He doesn't expect Mr. Peck to convince him in a private conference that he has been preaching an all-round gospel. I don't contend that he has; but I suppose I'm not a very competent judge. I don't propose to give you the opinion of one very fallible and erring man, and I don't set myself up in judgment of others; but I think it's important for all parties concerned to know what the majority of this society think on a question involving its future. That importance must excuse—if anything can excuse—the apparent want of taste, of humanity, of decency, in proposing the inquiry at a meeting over which the person chiefly concerned would naturally preside, unless he were warned to absent himself. Nobody cares for the contemptible point, the wholly insignificant question, whether allusion to Mr. Gerrish's variety store was intended or not. What we are all anxious to know is whether he represents any considerable portion of this society in his general attack upon its pastor. I want a vote on that, and I move the previous question."

No one stopped to inquire whether this was parliamentary or not. Putney sat down, and Colonel Marvin rose to say that if a vote was to be taken, it was only right and just that Mr. Peck should somehow be heard in his own behalf, and half a dozen voices from all parts of the church supported him. Mr. Peck, after a moment, said, "I think I have nothing to say;" and he added, "Shall I put the question?"

"Question!" "Question!" came from different quarters.

"It is moved and seconded that the resolution before the meeting be adopted," said the minister, formally. "All those in favor will say ay." He waited for a distinct space, but there was no response; Mr. Gerrish himself did not vote. The minister proceeded, "Those opposed will say no."

The word burst forth everywhere, and it was followed by laughter and inarticulate expressions of triumph and mocking. "Order! order!" called the minister, gravely, and he announced, "The noes have it."

The electric light began to suffer another syncope. When it recovered, with the usual fizzing and sputtering, Mr. Peck was on his feet, asking to be relieved from his duties as moderator, so that he might make a statement to the meeting. Colonel Marvin was voted into the chair, but refused formally to take possession of it. He stood up and said, "There is no place where we would rather hear you than in that pulpit, Mr. Peck."

"I thank you," said the minister, making himself heard through the approving murmur; "but I stand in this place only to ask to be allowed to leave it. The friendly feeling which has been expressed toward me in the vote upon the resolution you have just rejected is all that reconciles me to its defeat. Its adoption might have spared me a duty which I find painful. But perhaps it is best that I should discharge it. As to the sermon which called forth that resolution it is only just to say that I intended no personalities in it, and I humbly entreat any one who felt himself aggrieved to believe me." Every one looked at Gerrish to see how he took this; he must have felt it the part of self-respect not to change countenance. "My desire in that discourse was, as always, to present the truth as I had seen it, and try to make it a help to all. But I am by no means sure that the author of the resolution was wrong in arraigning me before you for neglecting a very vital part of Christianity in my ministrations here. I think with him, that those who have made an open profession of Christ have a claim to the consolation of His promises, and to the support which good men have found in the mysteries of faith; and I ask his patience and that of others who feel that I have not laid sufficient stress upon these.

My shortcoming is something that I would not have you overlook in any survey of my ministry among you; and I am not here now to defend that ministry in any point of view. As I look back over it, by the light of the one ineffable ideal, it seems only a record of failure and defeat." He stopped, and a sympathetic dissent ran through the meeting. "There have been times when I was ready to think that the fault was not in me, but in my office, in the church, in religion. We all have these moments of clouded vision, in which we ourselves loom up in illusory grandeur above the work we have failed to do. But it is in no such error that I stand before you now. Day after day it has been borne in upon me that I had mistaken my work here, and that I ought, if there was any truth in me, to turn from it for reasons which I will give at length should I be spared to preach in this place next Sabbath. I should have willingly acquiesced if our parting had come in the form of my dismissal at your hands. Yet I cannot wholly regret that it has not taken that form, and that in offering my resignation, as I shall formally do to those empowered by the rules of our society to receive it, I can make it a means of restoring concord among you. It would be affectation in me to pretend that I did not know of the dissension which has had my ministry for its object if not its cause; and I earnestly hope that with my withdrawal that dissension may cease, and that this church may become a symbol before the world of the peace of Christ. I conjure such of my friends as have been active in my behalf to unite with their brethren in a cause which can alone merit their devotion. Above all things I beseech you to be at peace one with another. Forbear, forgive, submit, remembering that strife for the better part can only make it the worse, and that for Christians there can be no rivalry but in concession and self-sacrifice."

Colonel Marvin forgot his office and all parliamentary proprieties in the tide of emotion that swept over the meeting when the minister sat down. "I am glad," he said, "that no sort of action need be taken now upon Mr. Peck's proposed resignation, which I for one cannot believe this society will ever agree to accept."

Others echoed his sentiment; they spoke out, sitting and standing, and addressed themselves to no one, till Putney moved an adjournment, which Colonel

Marvin sufficiently recollected himself to put to a vote, and declare carried.

Annie walked home with the Putneys and Dr. Morrell. She was aware of something unwholesome in the excitement which ran so wholly in Mr. Peck's favor, but abandoned herself to it with feverish helplessness.

"Ah-h-h!" cried Putney, when they were free of the crowd which pressed upon him with questions and conjectures and comments. "What a slump!—what a slump! That blessed, short-legged little seraph has spoilt the best sport that ever was. Why, he's sent that fool of a Gerrish home with the conviction that he was right in the part of his attack that was the most vilely hypocritical, and he's given that heartless scoundrel the pleasure of feeling like an honest man. I should like to rap Mr. Peck's head up against the back of his pulpit, and I should like to knock the skulls of Colonel Marvin and Mr. Wilmington together and see which was the thickest. Why, I had Gerrish fairly by the throat at last, and I was just reaching for the balm of Gilead with my other hand to give him a dose that would have done him for one while! Ah, it's too bad, too bad! Well! well! But—haw! haw! haw!—didn't Gerrish tangle himself up beautifully in his rhetoric? I guess we shall fix Brother Gerrish yet, and I don't think we shall let Brother Peck off without a tussle. I'm going to try print on Brother Gerrish. I'm going to ask him in the *Hathboro' Register*—he doesn't advertise, and the editor's as independent as a lion where a man don't advertise—"

"Indeed he's not going to do anything of the kind, Annie," said Mrs. Putney. "I shall not let him. I shall make him drop the whole affair now, and let it die out, and let us be at peace again, as Mr. Peck says."

"There seemed to be a good deal of sense in that part of it," said Dr. Morrell. "I don't know but he was right to propose himself as a peace-offering; perhaps there's no other way out."

"Well," said Mrs. Putney, "whether he goes or stays, I think we owe him that much. Don't you, Annie?"

"Oh yes!" sighed Annie, from the exaltation to which the events of the evening had borne her. "And we mustn't let him go. It would be a loss that every one would feel; that—"

"I'm tired of this fighting," Mrs. Putney broke in, "and I think it's ruining Ralph every way. He hasn't slept the last two nights, and he's been all in a quiver for the last fortnight. For my part I don't care what happens now, I'm not going to have Ralph mixed up in it any more. I think we ought all to forgive and forget. I'm willing to overlook everything, and I believe others are the same."

"You'd better ask Mrs. Gerrish the next time she calls," Putney interposed.

Mrs. Putney stopped, and took her hand from her husband's arm. "Well, after what Mr. Gerrish said to-night about you, I *don't* think Emmeline had better call *very* soon!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Putney, and his laugh flapped back at them in derisive echo from the house-front they were passing. "I guess Brother Peck had better stay and help fight it out. It won't be *all* brotherly love after he goes—or sisterly either."

XXVI.

Annie knew from the light in the kitchen window that Mrs. Bolton, who had not gone to the meeting, was there, and she inferred from the silence of the house that Bolton had not yet come home. She went up to her room, and after a glance at Idella asleep in her crib, she began to lay off her things. Then she sat down provisionally by the open window, and looked out into the still autumnal night. The air was soft and humid, with a scent of smoke in it from remote forest fires. The village lights showed themselves dimmed by the haze that thickened the moonless dark.

She heard steps on the gravel of the lane, and then two men talking, one of whom she knew to be Bolton. In a little while the back entry door was opened and shut, and after a brief murmur of voices in the library Mrs. Bolton knocked on the door-jamb of the room where Annie sat.

"What is it, Mrs. Bolton?"

"You in bed yet?"

"No; I'm here by the window. What is it?"

"Well, I don't know but what you'll think it's pretty late for callers, but Mr. Peck is down in the library. I guess he wants to speak with you about Idella. I told him he better see *you*."

"I will come right down."

She followed Mrs. Bolton to the foot of the stairs, where she kept on to the kitchen, while Annie turned into the library. Mr. Peck stood beside her father's desk, resting one hand on it and holding his hat in the other.

"Won't you be seated, Mr. Peck?"

"I thank you. It's only for a moment. I am going away to-morrow, and I wish to speak with you about Idella."

"Yes, certainly. But surely you are not going to leave Hatboro', Mr. Peck! I hoped—we all did—that after what you had seen of the strong feeling in your favor to-night you would reconsider your determination and stay with us!" She went on impetuously. "You must know—you must understand now—how much good you can do here—more than any one else—more than you could do anywhere else. I don't believe that you realize how much depends upon your staying here. You can't stop the dissensions by going away; it will only make them worse. You saw how Colonel Marvin and Mr. Wilmington were with you; and Mr. Gates—all classes. I oughtn't to speak—to attempt to teach you your duty; I'm not of your church; and I can only tell you how it seems to me: that you never can find another place where your principles—your views—"

He waited for her to go on; but she really had nothing more to say, and he began: "I am not hoping for another charge elsewhere, at least not for the present; but I am satisfied that my usefulness here is at an end, and I do not think that my going away will make matters worse. Whether I go or stay, the dissensions will continue. At any rate, I believe that there are those who need help more, and whom I can help more, in another field—"

"Yes," she broke in, with a woman's relevancy to the immediate point, "there is nothing to do here."

He went on as if she had not spoken: "I am going to Fall River to-morrow, where I have heard that there is work for me—"

"In the mills!" she exclaimed, recurring in thought to what he had once said of his work in them. "Surely you don't mean that!" The sight, the smell, the tumult of the work she had seen that day in the mill with Lyra came upon her with all their offense. "To throw away all that

you have learnt, all that you have become to others!"

"I am less and less confident that I have become anything useful to others in turning aside from the life of toil and presuming to attempt the guidance of those who remained in it. But I don't mean work in the mills," he continued, "or not at first, or not unless it seems necessary to my work with those who work in them. I have a plan—or if it hardly deserves that name, a design—of being useful to them in such ways as my own experience of their life in the past shall show me in the light of what I shall see among them now. I needn't trouble you with it."

"Oh yes!" she interposed.

"I do not expect to preach at once, but only to teach in one of the public schools, where, I have heard of a vacancy, and—and—perhaps otherwise. With those whose lives are made up of hard work there must be room for willing and peaceful service. And if it should be necessary that I should work in the mills in order to render this, then I will do so; but at present I have another way in view—a social way that shall bring me into immediate relations with the people." She still tried to argue with him, to prove him wrong in going away, but they both ended where they began. He would not or could not explain himself farther. At last he said: "But I did not come to urge this matter. I have no wish to impose my will, my theory, upon any one, even my own child."

"Oh yes—Idella!" Annie broke in, anxiously. "You will leave her with me, Mr. Peck, won't you? You don't know how much I'm attached to her. I see her faults, and I shall not spoil her. Leave her with me at least till you see your way clear to having her with you, and then I will send her to you."

A trouble showed itself in his face, ordinarily so impassive, and he seemed at a loss how to answer her; but he said: "I—appreciate your kindness to her, but I shall not ask you to be at the inconvenience longer than till to-morrow. I have arranged with another to take her until I am settled, and then bring her to me."

Annie sat intensely searching his face, with her lips parted to speak. "Another!" she said, and the wounded feeling, the resentment of his insensibility to her good-will, that mingled in her heart, must

have made itself felt in her voice, for he went on reluctantly:

"It is a family in which she will be brought up to work and to be helpful to herself. They will join me with her. You know the mother—she has lost her own child—Mrs. Savor."

At the name, Annie's spirit fell; the tears started from her eyes. "Yes, she must have her. It is just—it is the only expiation. Don't you remember that it was I who sent Mrs. Savor's baby to the sea-shore, where it died?"

"No; I had forgotten," said the minister, aghast. "I am sorry—"

"It doesn't matter," said Annie, lifelessly; "it had to be." After a pause, she asked, quietly, "If Mrs. Savor is going to work in the mills, how can she make a home for the child?"

"She is not going into the mills," he answered. "She will keep house for us all, and we hope to have others who are without homes of their own join us in paying the expenses and doing the work, so that all may share its comfort without gain to any one upon their necessity of food and shelter."

She did not heed his explanation, but suddenly entreated: "Let me go with you. I will not be a trouble to you, and I will help as well as I can. I can't give the child up! Why—why"—the thought, crazy as it would have once seemed, was now such a happy solution of the trouble that she smiled hopefully—"why shouldn't I go with Mr. and Mrs. Savor, and help to make a home for Idella there? You will need money to begin your work; I will give you mine. I will give it up—I will give it all up. I will give it to any good object that you approve; or you may have it, to do what you think best with; and I will go with Idella and I will work in the mills there—or anything."

He shook his head, and for the first time in their acquaintance he seemed to feel compassion for her. "It isn't possible. I couldn't take your money; I shouldn't know what to do with it."

"You know what to do with your own," she broke in. "You do good with that!"

"I'm afraid I do harm with it too," he returned. "It's only a little, but little as it has been, I can no longer meet the responsibility it brings."

"But if you took my money," she urged, "you could devote your life to preaching the truth, to writing and pub-

lishing books, and all that; and so could others: don't you see?"

He shook his head. "Perhaps others; but I have done with preaching for the present. Later I may have something to say. Now I feel sure of nothing, not even of what I've been saying here."

"Will you send for Idella? When she goes with the Savors I will come too!"

He looked at her sorrowfully. "I think you are a good woman, and you mean what you say. But I am sorry you say it, if any words of mine have caused you to say it, for I know you cannot do it. Even for me it is hard to go back to those associations, and for you they would be impossible."

"You will see," she returned, with exaltation. "I will take Idella to the Savors' to-morrow—or no; I'll have them come here!"

He stood looking at her in perplexity. At last he asked, "Could I see the child?"

"Certainly!" said Annie, with the lofty passion that possessed her, and she led him up into the chamber where Idella lay sleeping in Annie's own crib.

He stood beside it, gazing long at the little one, from whose eyes he shaded the lamp. Then he said, "I thank you," and turned away.

She followed him down-stairs, and at the door she said: "You think I will not come; but I will come. Don't you believe that?"

He turned sadly from her. "You might come, but you couldn't stay. You don't know what it is; you can't imagine it, and you couldn't bear it."

"I will come, and I will stay," she answered; and when he was gone she fell into one of those intense reveries of hers—a rapture in which she prefigured what should happen in that new life before her. At its end Mr. Peck stood beside her grave, reading the lesson of her work to the multitude of grateful and loving poor who thronged to pay the last tribute to her memory. Putney was there with his wife, and Lyra regretful of her lightness, and Mrs. Munger repentant of her mendacities. They talked together in awe-stricken murmurs of the noble career just ended. She heard their voices, and then she began to ask herself what they would really say of her proposing to go to Fall River with the Savors and be a mill-hand.

XXVII.

Annie did not sleep. After lying a long time awake she took some of the tonic that Dr. Morrell had left her, upon the chance that it might quiet her; but it did no good. She dressed herself, and sat by the window till morning.

The breaking day showed her purposes grotesque and monstrous. The revulsion that must come, came with a tide that swept before it all prepossessions, all affections. It seemed as if the child, still asleep in her crib, had heard what she said, and would help to hold her to her word.

She choked down a crust of bread with the coffee she drank at breakfast, and instead of romping with Idella at her bath, she dressed the little one silently, and sent her out to Mrs. Bolton. Then she sat down again in the sort of daze in which she had spent the night, and as the day passed, her revolt from what she had pledged herself to do mounted and mounted. It was like the sort of woman she was, not to think of any withdrawal from her pledges; they were all the more sacred with her because they had been purely voluntary, insistent; the fact that they had been refused made them the more obligatory.

She thought some one would come to break in upon the heavy monotony of the time; she expected Ralph or Ellen, or at least Lyra; but she only saw Mrs. Bolton, and heard her about her work. Sometimes the child stole back from the kitchen or the barn, and peeped in upon her with a roguish expectance which her gloomy stare defeated, and then it ran off again.

She lay down in the afternoon and tried to sleep; but her brain was inexorably alert, and she lay making inventory of all the pleasant things she was to leave for that ugly fate she had insisted on. A swarm of fancies gave every detail of the parting dramatic intensity. Amidst the poignancy of her regrets, her shame for her recreancy was sharper still.

By night she could bear it no longer. It was Dr. Morrell's custom to come nearly every night; but she was afraid, because he had walked home with her from the meeting the night before, he might not come now, and she sent for him. It was in quality of medicine-man, as well as physician, that she wished to see him; she meant to tell him all that had passed

with Mr. Peck; and this was perfectly easy in the interview she forecast; but at the sound of his buggy wheels in the lane a thought came that seemed to forbid her even to speak of Mr. Peck to him. For the first time it occurred to her that the minister might have inferred a meaning from her eagerness and persistence infinitely more preposterous than even the preposterous letter of her words. A number of little proofs of the conjecture flashed upon her: his anxiety to get away from her, his refusal to let her believe in her own constancy of purpose, his moments of bewilderment and dismay. It needed nothing but this to add the touch of intolerable absurdity to the horror of the whole affair, and to snatch the last hope of help from her.

She let Mrs. Bolton go to the door, and she did not rise to meet the doctor; she saw from his smile that he knew he had a moral rather than a physical trouble to deal with, but she did not relax the severity of her glare in sympathy, as she was tempted from some infinite remoteness to do.

When he said, "You're not well," she whispered solemnly back, "Not at all."

He did not pursue his inquiry into her condition, but said, with an irrelevant cheerfulness that piqued her, "I was coming here this evening at any rate, and I got your message on the way up from my office."

"You are very kind," she said, a little more audibly.

"I wanted to tell you," he went on, "of what a time Putney and I have had to-day working up public sentiment for Mr. Peck, so as to keep him here."

Annie did not change her position, but the expression of her glance changed.

"We've been round in the enemy's camp, everywhere; and I've committed Gerrish himself to an armed neutrality. That wasn't difficult. The difficulty was in another quarter—with Mr. Peck himself. He's more opposed than any one else to his stay in Hatboro'. You know he intended going away this morning?"

"Did he?" Annie asked, dishonestly. The question obliged her to say something.

"Yes. He came to Putney before breakfast to thank him and take leave of him, and to tell him of the plan he had for— Imagine what!"

"I don't know," said Annie, hoarsely,

after an effort, as if the untruth would not come easily. "I am worse than Mrs. Munger," she thought.

"For going to Fall River to teach school among the mill-hands' children! And to open a night school for the hands themselves."

The doctor waited for her sensation, and in its absence he looked so disappointed that she was forced to say, "To teach school?"

Then he went on briskly again. "Yes. Putney labored with him on his knees, so to speak, and got him to postpone his going till to-morrow morning; and then he came to me for help. We enlisted Mrs. Wilmington in the cause, and we've spent the day working up the Peck sentiment to a fever-heat. It's been a very queer campaign; three Gentiles toiling for a saint against the elect, and bringing them all over at last. We've got a paper, signed by a large majority of the members of the church—the church, not the society—asking Mr. Peck to remain; and Putney's gone to him with the paper, and he's coming round here to report Mr. Peck's decision. We all agreed that it wouldn't do to say anything about his plan for the future, and I fancy some of his people signed our petition under the impression that they were keeping a valuable man out of another pulpit."

Annie accompanied the doctor's words, which she took in to the last syllable, with a symphony of conjecture as to how the change in Mr. Peck's plans, if they prevailed with him, would affect her, and the doctor had not ceased to speak before she perceived that it would be deliverance perfect and complete, however inglorious. But the tacit drama so vividly preoccupied her with its minor questions of how to descend to this escape with dignity that still she did not speak, and he took up the word again.

"I confess I've had my misgivings about Mr. Peck, and about his final usefulness in a community like this. In spite of all that Putney can say of his hard-headedness, I'm afraid that he's a good deal of a dreamer. But I gave way to Putney, and I hope you'll appreciate what I've done for your favorite."

"You are very good," she said, in mechanical acknowledgment: her mind was set so strenuously to break from her dishonest reticence that she did not know really what she was saying. "Why—

why do you call him a dreamer?" She cast about in that direction at random.

"Why? Well, for one thing, the reason he gave Putney for giving up his luxuries here: that as long as there was hardship and overwork for underpay in the world, he must share them. It seems to me that I might as well say that as long as there were dyspepsia and rheumatism in the world, I must share them. Then he has a queer notion that he can go back and find instruction in the working-men—that they alone have the light and the truth, and know the meaning of life. I don't say anything against them. My observation and my experience is that if others were as good as they are in the ratio of their advantages, Mr. Peck needn't go to them for his ideal. But their conditions warp and dull them; they see things askew, and they don't see them clearly. I might as well expose myself to the small-pox in hopes of treating my fellow-sufferers more intelligently."

She could not perceive where his analogies rang false; they only overwhelmed her with a deeper sense of her own folly.

"But I don't know," he went on, "that a dreamer is such a desperate character, if you can only keep him from trying to realize his dreams; and if Mr. Peck consents to stay in Hatboro', perhaps we can manage it." He drew his chair a little toward the lounge where she reclined, and asked, with the kindness that was both personal and professional, "What seems to be the matter?"

She started up. "There is nothing—nothing that medicine can help. Why do you call him my favorite?" she demanded, violently. "But you have wasted your time. If he had made up his mind to what you say, he would never give it up—never in the world!" she added, hysterically. "If you've interfered between any one and his duty in this world, where it seems as if hardly any one had any duty, you've done a very unwarrantable thing." She was aware from his stare that her words were incoherent, if not from the words themselves, but she hurried on: "I am going with him. He was here last night, and I told him I would. I will go with the Savors, and we will keep the child together; and if they will take me, I shall go to work in the mills; and I shall not care what people think, if it's right—"

She stopped and weakly dropped back on the lounge, and hid her face in the pillow.

"I really don't understand." The doctor began, with a physician's carefulness, to unwind the coil she had flung down to him. "Are the Savors going, and the child?"

"He will give her the child for the one they lost—you know how! And they will take it with them."

"But you—what have you—"

"I must have the child too! I can't give it up, and I shall go with them. There's no other way. You don't know. I've given him my word, and there is no hope!"

"He asked you," said the doctor, to make sure he had heard aright—"he asked you—advised you—to go to work in a cotton mill?"

"No;" she lifted her face to confront him. "He told me *not* to go; but I said I would."

They sat staring at each other in a silence which neither of them broke, and which promised to last indefinitely. They were still in their daze when Putney's voice came through the open hall door.

"Hello! hello! hello! Hello, Central! *Can't* I make you hear, any one?" His steps advanced into the hall, and he put his head in at the library doorway. "Thought you'd be here," he said, nodding at the doctor. "Well, doctor, Brother Peck's beaten us again. He's going."

"Going?" the doctor echoed.

"Yes. It's no use. I put the whole case before him, and I argued it with a force of logic that would have fetched the twelfth man with eleven stubborn fellows against him on a jury; but it didn't fetch Brother Peck. He was very appreciative and grateful, but he believes he's got a call to give up the ministry, for the present at least. Well, there's some consolation in supposing he may know best, after all. It seemed to us that he had a great opportunity in Hatboro', but if he turns his back on it, perhaps it's a sign he wasn't equal to it. The doctor told you what we've been up to, Annie?"

"Yes," she answered, faintly, from the depths of the labyrinth in which she was plunged again.

"I'm sorry for your news about him," said the doctor. "I hoped he was going to stay. It's always a pity when such a man lets his sympathies use him instead of using them. But we must always

judge that kind of crank leniently, if he doesn't involve other people in his craze."

She knew that he was shielding and trying to spare her, and she felt inexpressibly degraded by the terms of his forbearance. She could not accept, and she had not the strength to refuse it; and Putney said: "I've not seen anything to make me doubt his sanity; but I must say the present racket shakes my faith in his common-sense, and I rather held by that, you know. But I suppose no man, except the kind of a man that a woman would be if she were a man—excuse me, Annie—is ever absolutely right. I suppose the truth is a constitutional thing, and you can't separate it from the personal consciousness, and so you get it colored and heated by personality when you get it fresh. That is, we can see what the absolute truth was, but never what it is."

Putney amused himself in speculating on these lines with more or less reference to Mr. Peck, and did not notice that the doctor and Annie gave him only a silent assent. "As to misleading any one else, Mr. Peck's following in his new religion seems to be confined to the Savors, as I understand. They are going with him to help him set up a sort of co-operative boarding-house. Well, I don't know where we shall get a hotter gospeller than Brother Peck. Poor old fellow! I hope he'll get along better in Fall River. It is something to be out of reach of Gerrish."

The doctor asked, "When is he going?"

"Why, he's gone by this time, I suppose," said Putney. "I tried to get him to think about it overnight, but he wouldn't. He's anxious to go and get back, so as to preach his last sermon here Sunday, and he's taken the 9.10, if he hasn't changed his mind." Putney looked at his watch.

"Let's hope he hasn't," said Dr. Morrell.

"Which?" asked Putney.

"Changed his mind. I'm sorry he's coming back."

Annie knew that he was talking at her, though he spoke to Putney; but she was powerless to protest.

XXVIII.

They went away together, leaving her to her despair, which had passed into a sort of torpor by the following night, when Dr. Morrell came again, out of what she knew must be mere humanity; he could not respect her any longer. He told

her, as if for her comfort, that Putney had gone to the depot to meet Mr. Peck, who was expected back in the eight-o'clock train, and was to labor with him all night long if necessary to get him to change, or at least postpone, his purpose. The feeling in his favor was growing. Putney hoped to put it so strongly to him as a proof of duty that he could not resist it.

Annie listened comfortlessly. Whatever happened, nothing could take away the shame of her weakness now. She even wished, feebly, vaguely, that she might be forced to keep her word.

A sound of running on the gravel-walk outside and a sharp pull at the door-bell seemed to jerk them both to their feet.

Some one stepped into the hall panting, and the face of William Savor showed itself at the door of the room where they stood. "Doc—Doctor Morrell, come—come quick! There's been an accident—at—the depot. Mr.—Peck—" He panted out the story, and Annie saw rather than heard how the minister tried to cross the track from his train, where it had halted short of the station, and the flying express from the other quarter caught him from his feet, and dropped the bleeding fragment that still held his life beside the rail a hundred yards away, and then kept on in brute ignorance into the night.

"Where is he? Where have you got him?" the doctor demanded of Savor.

"At my house."

The doctor ran out of the house, and she heard his buggy whirl away, followed by the fainter sound of Savor's feet as he followed running, after he had stopped to repeat his story to the Boltons. Annie turned to the farmer. "Mr. Bolton, get the carry-all. I must go."

"And me too," said his wife.

"Why, no, Pauliny; I guess you better stay. I guess it'll come out all right in the end," Bolton began. "I guess William has exaggerated some, maybe. Any rate, who's goin' to look after the little girl if you come?"

"I am," Mrs. Bolton snapped back. "She's goin' with me."

"Of course she is. Be quick, Mr. Bolton!" Annie called from the stairs, which she had already mounted half-way.

She caught up the child, limp with sleep, from its crib, and began to dress it. Idella cried, and fought away the hands that tormented her, and made herself now very stiff and now very lax; but Annie

and Mrs. Bolton together prevailed against her, and she was dressed, and had fallen asleep again in her clothes while the women were putting on their hats and sacks, and Bolton was driving up to the door with the carry-all.

"Why, I can see," he said, when he got out to help them in, "just how William's got his idee about it. His wife's an excitable kind of a woman, and she's sent him off lickety-split after the doctor without looking to see what the matter was. There hain't never been anybody hurt at our depot, and it don't stand to reason—"

"Oliver Bolton, *will* you hush that noise?" shrieked his wife. "If the world was burnin' up you'd say it was nothing but a chimbley on fire som'er's."

"Well, well, Pauliny, have it your own way, have it your own way," said Bolton. "I ain't sayin' but what there's *some*thin' in William's story; but you'll see 't he's exaggerated. Git up!"

"Well, do hurry, and *do* be still!" said his wife.

"Yes, yes. It's all right, Pauliny; all right. Soon's I'm out the lane, you'll see 't I'll drive *fast* enough."

Mrs. Bolton kept a grim silence, against which her husband's babble of optimism played like heat-lightning on a night sky.

Idella woke with the rush of cold air, and in the dark and strangeness began to cry, and wailed heart-breakingly between her fits of louder sobbing, and then fell asleep again before they reached the house where her father lay dying.

They had put him in the best bed in Mrs. Savor's little guest-room, and when Annie entered, the minister was apologizing to her for spoiling it.

"Now don't you say one word, Mr. Peck," she answered him. "It's all right. I ruthah see you layin' there just 's you be than plenty of folks that—" She stopped for want of an apt comparison, and at sight of Annie she said, as if he were a child whose mind was wandering: "Well, I declare, if here ain't Miss Kilburn come to see you, Mr. Peck! And Mis' Bolton! Well, the land!"

Mrs. Savor came and shook hands with them, and in her character of hostess urged them forward from the door, where they had halted. "Want to see Mr. Peck? Well, he's real comf'table now; ain't he, Dr. Morrell? We got him all fixed up nicely, and he ain't in a bit o' pain. It's

his spine that's hurt, so 't he don't feel nothin'; but he's just as clear in his mind as what you or I be. *Ain't* he, doctor?"

"He's not suffering," said Dr. Morrell, to whom Annie's eye wandered from Mrs. Savor, and there was something in his manner that made her think the minister was not badly hurt. She went forward with Mr. and Mrs. Bolton, and after they had both taken the limp hand that lay outside the covering, she touched it too. It returned no pressure, but his large, warm eyes looked at her with such gentle dignity and intelligence that she began to frame in her mind an excuse for what seemed almost an intrusion.

"We were afraid you were hurt badly, and we thought—we thought you might like to see Idella—and so—we came. She is in the next room."

"Thank you," said the minister. "I presume that I am dying; the doctor tells me that I have but a few hours to live."

Mrs. Savor protested, "Oh, I guess you ain't a-goin' to die *this* time, Mr. Peck." Annie looked from Dr. Morrell to Putney, who stood with him on the other side of the bed, and experienced a shock from their gravity without yet being able to accept the fact it implied. "There's plenty of folks," continued Mrs. Savor, "hurt worse 'n what you be that's alive to-day and as well as ever they was."

Bolton seized his chance. "It's just what I said to Pauliny, comin' along. 'You'll see,' said I, 'Mr. Peck 'll be out as spry as any of us before a great while.' That's the way I felt about it from the start."

"All you got to do is to keep up courage," said Mrs. Savor.

"That's so; that's half the battle," said Bolton.

There were numbers of people in the room and at the door of the next. Annie saw Colonel Marvin and Jack Wilmington. She heard afterward that he was going to take the same train to Boston with Mr. Peck, and had helped to bring him to the Savors' house. The station-master was there, and some other railroad employés.

The doctor leaned across the bed and lifted slightly the arm that lay there, taking the wrist between his thumb and finger. "I think we had better let Mr. Peck rest awhile," he said to the company generally. "We're doing him no good."

The people began to go; some of them

said, "Well, good-night!" as if they would meet again in the morning. They all made the pretence that it was a slight matter, and treated the wounded man as if he were a child. He did not humor the pretence, but said "Good-by" in return for their "Good-night" with a quiet patience.

Mrs. Savor hastened after her retreating guests. "I ain't a-goin' to let you go without a sup of coffee," she said. "I want you should all stay and git some, and I don't believe but what a little of it would do Mr. Peck good."

The surface of her lugubrious nature was broken up, and whatever was kindly and cheerful in its depths floated to the top; she was almost gay in the demand which the calamity made upon her. Annie knew that she must have seen and helped to soothe the horror of mutilation which she could not even let her fancy figure, and she followed her foolish bustle and chatter with respectful awe.

"Rebecca 'll have it right off the stove in half a minute now," Mrs. Savor concluded; and from a further room came the cheerful click of cups, and then a wandering whiff of the coffee; life in its vulgar kindness touched and made friends with death, claiming it a part of nature too.

The night at Mrs. Munger's came back to Annie from the immeasurable remoteness into which all the past had lapsed. She looked up at Dr. Morrell across the bed.

"Would you like to speak with Mr. Peck?" he asked, officially. "Better do it now," he said, with one of his short nods.

Putney came and set her a chair. She would have liked to fall on her knees beside the bed; but she took the chair, and drew the minister's hand into hers, stretching her arm above his head on the pillow. He lay like some poor little wounded boy, like Putney's Winthrop; the mother that is in every woman's heart gushed out of hers in pity upon him, mixed with filial reverence. She had thought that she should confess her baseness to him, and ask his forgiveness, and offer to fulfil with the people he had chosen for the guardians of his child that interrupted purpose of his. But in the presence of death, so august, so simple, all the concerns of life seemed trivial, and she found herself without words. She sobbed over the poor hand she held. He

turned his eyes upon her and tried to speak, but his lips only let out a moaning, shuddering sound, inarticulate of all that she hoped or feared he might prophesy to shape her future.

Life alone has any message for life, but from the beginning of time it has put its ear to the cold lips that must forever remain dumb.

XXIX.

The evening after the funeral Annie took Idella, with the child's clothes and toys in a bundle, and Bolton drove them down Over the Track to the Savors'. She had thought it all out, and she perceived that whatever the minister's final intention might have been, she was bound by the purpose he had expressed to her, and must give up the child. For fear she might be acting from the false conscientiousness of which she was beginning to have some notion in herself, she put the case to Mrs. Bolton. She knew what she must do in any event, but it was a comfort to be stayed so firmly in her duty by Mrs. Bolton, who did not spare some doubts of Mrs. Savor's fitness for the charge, and reflected a subdued censure even upon the judgment of Mr. Peck himself, as she bustled about and helped Annie get Idella and her belongings ready. The child watched the preparations with suspicion. At the end, when she was dressed, and Annie tried to lift her into the carriage, she broke out in sudden rebellion; she cried, she shrieked, she fought; the two good women who were obeying the dead minister's behest were obliged to descend to the foolish lies of the nursery; they told her she was going on a visit to the Savors, who would take her on the cars with them, and then bring her back to Aunt Annie's house. Before they could reconcile her to this fabled prospect they had to give it verisimilitude by taking off her every-day clothes and putting on her best dress.

She did not like Mrs. Savor's house when she came to it, nor Mrs. Savor, who stopped, all blowzed and work-deranged from trying to put it in order after the death in it, and gave Idella a motherly welcome. Annie fancied a certain surprise in her manner, and her own ideal of duty was put to proof by Mrs. Savor's owning that she had not expected Annie to bring Idella to her right away.

"If I had not done it at once, I never could have done it," Annie explained.

"Well, I presume it's a cross," said Mrs. Savor, "and I don't feel right to take her. If it wa'n't for what her father—"

"Sh!" Annie said, with a significant glance.

"It's an ugly house!" screamed the child. "I want to go back to my Aunt Annie's house. I want to go on the cars."

"Yes, yes," answered Mrs. Savor, blindly groping to share in whatever cheat had been practised on the child, "just as soon as the cars starts. Here, William, you take her out and show her the pretty coop you be'n makin' the pigeons, to keep the cats out."

They got rid of her with Savor's connivance for the moment, and Annie hastened to escape.

"We had to tell her she was going a journey, or we never could have got her into the carriage," she explained, feeling like a thief.

"Yes, yes. It's all right," said Mrs. Savor. "I see you'd be'n putting up some kind of job on her the minute she mentioned the cars. Don't you fret any, Miss Kilburn. Rebecca and me'll get along with her, you needn't be afraid."

Annie could not look at the empty crib where it stood in its alcove when she went to bed; and she cried upon her own pillow with heart-sickness for the child, and with a humiliating doubt of her own part in hurrying to give it up without thought of Mrs. Savor's convenience. What had seemed so noble, so exemplary, began to wear another color; and she drowsed, worn out at last by the swarming fears, shames, and despairs, which resolved themselves into a fantastic medley of dream images. There was a cat trying to get at the pigeons in the coop which Mr. Savor had carried Idella to see. It clawed and mialed at the lattice-work of lath, and its caterwauling became like the cry of a child, so like that it woke Annie from her sleep, and still kept on. She lay shuddering a moment; it seemed as if the dead minister's ghost flitted from the room, while the crying defined and located itself more and more, till she knew it a child's wail at the door of her house. Then she heard "Aunt Annie! Aunt Annie!" and soft, faint thumps as of a little fist upon the door panels.

She had no experience of more than one motion from her bed to the door,

which the same impulse flung open and let her crush to her breast the little tumult of sobs and moans from the threshold.

"Oh, wicked, selfish, heartless wretch!" she stormed out over the child. "But now I will never, never, never give you up! Oh, my poor little baby! my darling! God has sent you back to me, and I will keep you, I don't care what happens! What a cruel wretch I have been—oh, what a cruel wretch, my pretty!—to tear you from your home! But now you shall never leave it; no one shall take you away." She gripped it in a succession of fierce hugs, and mumbled it—face and neck, and little cold wet hands and feet—with her kisses; and all the time she did not know the child was in its night-dress like herself, or that her own feet were bare, and her drapery as scanty as Idella's.

A sense of the fact evanescently gleamed upon her with the appearance of Mrs. Bolton, lamp in hand, and the instantaneous appearance and disappearance of her husband at the back door through which she emerged. The two women spent the first moments of the lamp-light in making certain that Idella was sound and whole in every part, and then in making uncertain forever how she came to be there. Whether she had wandered out in her sleep, and found her way home with dream-led feet, or whether she had watched till the house was quiet, and then stolen away, was what she could not tell them, and must always remain a mystery.

"I don't believe but what Mr. Bolton had better go and wake up the Savors. You got to keep her for the night, I presume, but they'd ought to know where she is, and you can take her over there agin, come daylight."

"Mrs. Bolton!" shouted Annie, in a voice so deep and hoarse that it shook the heart of a woman who had never known fear of man. "If you say such a thing to me—if you ever say such a thing again—I—I—I will *hit* you! Send Mr. Bolton for Idella's things—right away!"

"Land!" said Mrs. Savor, when Bolton, after a long conciliatory preamble, explained that he did not believe Miss Kilburn felt a great deal like giving the child up again. "I don't want it without it's satisfied to stay. I see last night it was just breakin' its heart for her, and I told William when we first missed her this mornin', and he was in such a pucker

about her, I bet anything he was a mind to that the child had gone back to Miss Kilburn's. That's just the words I used; didn't I, Rebecca? I couldn't stand it to have no child *grievin'* around."

Beyond this sentimental reluctance, Mrs. Savor later confessed to Annie herself that she was really accepting the charge of Idella in the same spirit of self-sacrifice as that in which Annie was surrendering it, and that she felt, when Mr. Peck first suggested it, that the child was better off with Miss Kilburn; only she *hated to say so*. Her husband seemed to think it would make up to her for the one they lost, but nothing could really do that.

XXX.

In a reverie of rare vividness following her recovery of the minister's child, Annie Kilburn dramatized an escape from all the failures and humiliations of her life in Hatboro'. She took Idella with her and went back to Rome, accomplishing the whole affair so smoothly and rapidly that she wondered at herself for not having thought of such a simple solution of her difficulties before. She even began to put some little things together for her flight, while she explained to old friends in the American colony that Idella was the orphan child of a country minister, which she had adopted. That old lady who had found her motives in returning to Hatboro' insufficient questioned her sharply *why* she had adopted the minister's child, and did not find her answers satisfactory. They were such as also failed to pacify inquiry in Hatboro', where Annie remained, in spite of her reverie; but people accepted the fact, and accounted for it in their own way, and approved it, even though they could not quite approve her.

The dramatic impressiveness of the minister's death won him undisputed favor, yet it failed to establish unity in his society. Supply after supply filled his pulpit, but the people found them all unsatisfactory when they remembered his preaching, and could not make up their minds to any one of them. They were more divided than ever, except upon the point of regretting Mr. Peck. But they distinguished, in honoring his memory. They revered his goodness and his wisdom, but they regarded his conduct of life as unpractical. They said there never was a more inspired teacher, but it was

impossible to follow him, and he could not himself have kept the course he had marked out. They said, now that he was beyond recall, no one else could have built up the church in Hatboro' as he could, if he could only have let impracticable theories alone. Mr. Gerrish called many people to witness that this was what he had always said. He contended that it was the *spirit* of the gospel which you were to follow. He said that if Mr. Peck had gone to teaching among the mill-hands, he would have been sick of it inside of six weeks; but he was a good Christian man, and no one wished less than Mr. Gerrish to reproach him for what was, after all, more an error of the head than the heart. His critics had it their own way in this, for he had not lived to offer that full exposition of his theory and justification of his purpose which he had been expected to give on the Sunday after he was killed; and his death was in no wise exegetic. It said no more to his people than it had said to Annie; it was a mere casualty; and his past life, broken and unfulfilled, with only its intimations and intentions of performance, alone remained.

When people learned, as they could hardly help doing from Mrs. Savor's volubility, what his plan with regard to Idella had been, they instanced that in proof of the injuriousness of his idealism as applied to real life; and they held that she had been remanded in that strange way to Miss Kilburn's charge for some purpose which she must not attempt to cross. As the minister had been thwarted in another intent by death, it was a sign that he was wrong in this too, and that she could do better by the child than he had proposed.

This was the sum of popular opinion; and it was further the opinion of Mrs. Gerrish, who gave more attention to the case than many others, that Annie had first taken the child because she hoped to get Mr. Peck, when she found she could not get Dr. Morrell; and that she would have been very glad to be rid of it if she had known how, but that she would have to keep it now for shame's sake.

For shame's sake certainly, Annie would have done several other things, and chief of these would have been never to see Dr. Morrell again. She believed that he not only knew the folly she had confessed to him, but that he had divined

the cowardice and meanness in which she had repented it, and she felt intolerably disgraced before the thought of him. She had imagined mainly because of him that escape to Rome which never has yet been effected, though it might have been attempted if Idella had not wakened ill from the sleep she sobbed herself into when she found herself safe in Annie's crib again.

She had taken a heavy cold, and she moped lifelessly about during the day, and drowsed early again in a troubled cough-broken slumber.

"That child ought to have the doctor," said Mrs. Bolton, with the grim impartiality in which she masked her interference.

"Well," said Annie, helplessly.

At the end of the lung fever which followed, "It was a narrow chance," said the doctor one morning; "but now I needn't come any more unless you send for me."

Annie stood at the door, where he spoke with his hand on the dash-board of his buggy before getting into it.

She answered with one of those impulses that come from something deeper than intention, "I will send for you, then—to tell you how generous you are," and in the look with which she spoke she uttered the full meaning that her words withheld.

He flushed for pleasure of conscious desert, but he had to laugh and turn it off lightly. "I don't think I could come for that. But I'll look in to see Idella unprofessionally."

He drove away, and she remained at her door looking up at the summer blue sky that held a few soft white clouds, such as might have overhung the same place at the same hour thousands of years before, and such as would lazily drift over it in a thousand years to come. The morning had an immeasurable vastness, through which some crows flying across the pasture above the house sent their voices on the spacious stillness. A perception of the unity of all things under the sun flashed and faded upon her, as such glimpses do. Of her high intentions, nothing had resulted. An inexorable centrifugality had thrown her off at every point where she tried to cling. Nothing of what was established and regulated had desired her intervention; a few accidents and irregularities had alone accepted it. But now she felt that nothing with-

al had been lost; a magnitude, a serenity, a tolerance, intimated itself in the universal frame of things, where her failure, her recreancy, her folly, seemed for the moment to come into true perspective, and to show venial and unimportant, to be limited to itself, and to be even good in its effect of humbling her to patience with all imperfection and shortcoming, even her own. She was aware of the cessation of a struggle that has never since renewed itself with the old intensity; her wishes, her propensities, ceased in that degree to represent evil in conflict with the portion of good in her; they seemed so mixed and interwoven with the good that they could no longer be antagonized; for the moment they seemed in their way even wiser and better, and ever after to be the nature out of which good as well as evil might come.

As she remained standing there, Mr. Brandreth came round the corner of the house, looking very bright and happy.

"Miss Kilburn," he said, abruptly, "I want you to congratulate me. I'm engaged to Miss Chapley."

"Are you indeed, Mr. Brandreth? I do congratulate you with all my heart. She is a lovely girl."

"Yes, it's all right now," said Mr. Brandreth. "I've come to tell you the first one, because you seemed to take an interest in it when I told you of the trouble about the Juliet. We hadn't come to any understanding before that, but that seemed to bring us both to the point, and—and we're engaged. Mother and I are going to New York for the winter; we think she can risk it; and at any rate she won't be separated from me; and we shall be back in our little home next May. You know that I'm to be with Mr. Chapley in his business?"

"Why, no! This is *great* news, Mr. Brandreth! I don't know what to say."

"You're very kind," said the young man, and for the third or fourth time he wrung her hand. "It isn't a partnership, of course; but he thinks I can be of use to him."

"I know you can!" Annie ventured.

"We are very busy getting ready—nearly everybody else is gone—and mother sent her kindest regards—you know she don't make calls—and I just ran up to tell you. Well, *good-by*!"

"*Good-by*! Give my love to your mother, and to your—to Miss Chapley."

"I will." He hurried off, and then

came running back. "Oh, I forgot! About the Social Union fund. You know we've got about two hundred dollars from the theatricals, but the matter seems to have stopped there, and some of us think there'd better be some other disposition of the money. Have you any suggestion to make?"

"No, none."

"Then I'll tell you. It's proposed to devote the money to beautifying the grounds around the soldiers' monument. They ought to be fenced and planted with flowers—turned into a little public garden. Everybody appreciates the interest you took in the Union, and we hoped you'd be pleased with that disposition of the money."

"It is very kind," said Annie, with a meek submission that must have made him believe she was deeply touched.

"As I'm not to be here this winter," he continued, "we thought we had better leave the whole matter in your hands, and the money has been deposited in the bank subject to your order. It was Mrs. Munger's idea. I don't think she's ever felt just right about that evening of the dramatics, don't you know. *Good-by!*"

He ran off to escape her thanks for this proof of confidence in her taste and judgment, and he was gone beyond her protest before she emerged from her daze into a full sense of the absurdity of the situation.

"Well, it's a very simple matter to let the money lie in the bank," said Dr. Morrell, who came that evening to make his first unprofessional visit, and received with pure amusement the account of the affair, which she gave him with a strong infusion of vexation.

"The way I was involved in this odious Social Union business from the first, and now have it left on my hands in the end, is maddening. Why, I can't get rid of it!" she replied.

"Then, perhaps," he comfortably suggested, "it's a sign you're not intended to get rid of it."

"What *do* you mean?"

"Why don't you go on," he irresponsibly ventured farther, "and establish a Social Union?"

"Do you *mean* it?"

"What was that notion of his"—they usually spoke of the minister pronominally—"about getting the Savors going in a co-operative boarding-house at Fall

River? Putney said something about it."

Annie explained, as she had heard it from him, and from the Savors since his death, the minister's scheme for a club, in which the members should contribute the labor and the provisions, and should live cheaply and wholesomely under the management of the Savors at first, and afterward should continue them in charge, or not, as they chose. "He seemed to have thought it out very carefully. But I supposed, of course, it was impractical."

"Was that why you were going in for it?" asked the doctor; and then he spared her confusion in adding: "I don't see why it was impractical. It seems to me a very good notion for a Social Union. Why not try it here? There isn't the same pressing necessity that there is in a big factory town; but you have the money, and you have the Savors to make a beginning."

His tone was still half bantering; but it had become more and more serious, so that she could say in earnest: "But the money is one of the drawbacks. It was Mr. Peck's idea that the working people ought to do it all themselves."

"Well, I should say that two-thirds of that money in the bank had come from them. They turned out in great force to Mr. Brandreth's theatricals. And wouldn't it be rather high-handed to use their money for anything but the Union?"

"You don't suppose," said Annie, hotly, "that I would spend a cent of it on the grounds of that idiotic monument? I would pay for having it blown up with dynamite! No, I can't have anything more to do with the wretched affair. My touch is fatal." The doctor laughed, and she added: "Besides, I believe most heartily with Mr. Peck that no person of means and leisure can meet working people except in the odious character of a patron, and if I didn't respect them, I respect myself too much for that. If I were ready to go in with them and start the Social Union on his basis, by helping do house-work—*scullion* work—for it, and eating and living with them, I might try; but I know from experience I'm not. I haven't the need, and to pretend that I have, to forego my comforts and luxuries in a make-believe that I haven't them, would be too ghastly a farce, and I won't."

"Well, then, don't," said the doctor, bent more perhaps on carrying his point

in argument than on promoting the actual establishment of the Social Union. "But my idea is this: Take two-thirds or one-half of that money, and go to Savor, and say: 'Here! This is what Mr. Brandreth's theatricals swindled the shop-hands out of. It's honestly theirs, at least to control; and if you want to try that experiment of Mr. Peck's here in Hatboro', it's yours. We people of leisure, or comparative leisure, have really nothing in common with you people who work with your hands for a living; and as we really can't be friends with you, we won't patronize you. We won't advise you, and we won't help you; but here's the money. If you fail, you fail; and if you succeed, you won't succeed by our aid and comfort.'"

The plan that Annie and Doctor Morrell talked over half in joke took a more and more serious character in her sense of duty to the minister's memory and the wish to be of use, which was not extinct in her, however she mocked and defied it. It was part of the irony of her fate that the people who were best able to counsel with her in regard to it were Lyra, whom she could not approve, and Jack Wilmington, whom she had always disliked. He was able to contribute some facts about the working of the Thayer Club at the Harvard Memorial Hall in Cambridge, and Lyra because she had been herself a hand, and would not forget it, was of use in bringing the scheme into favor with the hands. They felt easy with her, as they did with Putney, and for much the same reason: it is one of the pleasing facts of our conditions that people who are socially inferior like best those above them who are morally anomalous. It was really through Lyra that Annie got at the working people, and when it came to a formal conference, there was no one who could command their confidence like Putney, whom they saw mad-drunk two or three times a year, but always pulling up and fighting back to sanity against the enemy whose power some of them had felt too.

No theory is so perfect as not to be subject to exceptions in the experiment, and in spite of her conviction of the truth of Mr. Peck's social philosophy, Annie is aware, through her simple and frank relations with the hands in a business matter, of mutual kindness which it does not account for. But perhaps the philosophy and the experiment were not contradic-

tory: perhaps it was intended to cover only the cases in which they had no common interest. At any rate, when the Peck Social Union, as its members voted to call it, at the suggestion of one of their own number, got in working order, she was as cordially welcomed to the charge of its funds and accounts as if she had been a hat-shop hand or a shoe-binder. She is really of use, for its working is by no means ideal, and with her wider knowledge she has suggested improvements and expedients for making both ends meet which were sometimes so reluctant to meet. She has kept a conscience against subsidizing the Union from her own means; and she even accepts for her services a small salary, which its members think they ought to pay her. She owns this ridiculous, like all the make-believe work of rich people; a travesty which has no reality except the little sum it added to the greater sum of her superabundance. She is aware that she is a pensioner upon the real members of the Social Union for a chance to be useful, and that the work they let her do is the right of some one who needs it. She has thought of doing the work and giving the pay to another; but she sees that this would be pauperizing and degrading another. So she dwells in a vicious circle, and waits, and mostly forgets, and is mostly happy.

The Social Union itself, though not a brilliant success in all points, is still not a failure; and the promise of its future is in the fact that it continues to have a present. The people of Hatboro' are rather proud of it, and strangers visit it as one of the possible solutions of one of the social problems. It is predicted that it cannot go on; that it must either do better or do worse; but it goes on the same.

Putney studies its existence in the light of his own infirmity, to which he still yields from time to time, as he has always done. He professes to find there a law which would account for a great many facts of human experience otherwise inexplicable. He does not attempt to define this occult preservative principle, but he offers himself and the Social Union as proofs of its existence; and he argues that if they can only last long enough they will finally be established in a virtue and prosperity as great as those of Mr. Gerrish and his store.

Annie sometimes feels that nothing else can explain the maintenance of Lyra

Wilmington's peculiar domestic relations at the point which perpetually invites comment and never justifies scandal. The situation seems to her as lamentable as ever. She grieves over Lyra, and likes her, and laughs with her; she no longer detests Jack Wilmington so much since he showed himself so willing and helpful about the Social Union; she thinks there must be a great deal of good in him, and sometimes she is sorry for him, and longs to speak again to Lyra about the wrong she is doing him. One of the dangers of having a very definite point of view is the temptation of abusing it to read the whole riddle of the painful earth. Annie has permitted herself to think of Lyra's position as one which would be impossible in a state of things where there was neither poverty nor riches, and there was neither luxury on one hand to allure, nor the fear of want to constrain on the other.

When her recoil from the fulfilment of her volunteer pledge to Mr. Peck brought her face to face with her own weakness, there were two ways back to self-respect, either of which she might take. She might revert to her first opinion of him, and fortify herself in that contempt and rejection of his ideas, or she might abandon herself to them, with a vague intention of reparation to him, and accept them to the last insinuation of their logic. This was what she did, and while her life remained the same outwardly, it was inwardly all changed. She never could tell by what steps she reached her agreement with the minister's philosophy; perhaps, as a woman, it was not possible she should; but she had a faith concerning it to which she bore unswerving allegiance, and it was Putney's delight to witness its revolutionary effect on an old Hatboro' Kilburn, the daughter of a shrewd lawyer and canny politician like her father, and the heir of an aristocratic tradition, a gentlewoman born and bred. He declared himself a reactionary in comparison with her, and had the habit of taking the conservative side against her. She was in the joke of this; but it was a real trouble to her for a time that Dr. Morrell, after admitting the force of her reasons, should be content to rest in a comfortable inconclusion as to his conduct, till one day she reflected that this was what she was herself doing, and that she differed from him only in the openness with which she proclaimed

her opinions. Being a woman, her opinions were treated by the magnates of Hatboro' as a good joke, the harmless fantasies of an old maid, which she would get rid of if she could get anybody to marry her; being a lady, and very well off, they were received with deference, and she was left to their uninterrupted enjoyment. Putney amused himself by saying that she was the fiercest apostle of labor that never did a stroke of work; but no one cared half so much for all that as for the question whether her affair with Dr. Morrell was a friendship or a courtship. They saw an activity of attention on his part which would justify the most devout belief in the latter, and yet they were confronted with the fact that it so long remained eventless. The two theories, one that she was amusing herself with him, and the other that he was just playing with her, divided public opinion, but they did not molest either of the parties to the mystery; and the village, after a season of acute conjecture, quiesced into that sarcastic sufferance of the anomaly into which it may have been noticed that small communities are apt to subside from such occasions. Except for some such irreconcilable as Mrs. Gerrish, it was a good joke that if you could not find Dr. Morrell in his office after tea, you could always find him at Miss Kilburn's. Perhaps it might have helped solve the mystery if it had been known that she could not accept the situation, whatever it really was, without satisfying herself upon two points, which resolved themselves into one in the process of the inquiry.

She asked, apparently as preliminary to answering a question of his, "Have you heard that gossip about my—being in—caring for the poor man?"

"Yes."

"And did you—what did you think?"

"That it wasn't true. I knew if there were anything in it, you couldn't have talked him over with me."

She was silent. Then she said, in a low voice: "No, there couldn't have been. But not for that reason alone, though it's very delicate and generous of you to think of it, very large-minded; but because it *couldn't* have been. I could have worshipped him, but I couldn't have loved him—any more," she added, with an implication that entirely satisfied him, "than I could have worshipped *you*."

THE END.

THE NEW ORLEANS BENCH AND BAR IN 1823.

BY CHARLES GAYARRÉ.

TWENTY years had elapsed since the cession of Louisiana to the French by the Spaniards, and by the French to the United States, and yet very few of the ancient population of the Latin race who had witnessed that event, or who had been born since, had acquired any knowledge of the English language, and still fewer among the new-comers of Anglo-Saxon origin had made any effort to learn to speak French, or even to understand it, so that intercourse between the two races, either for pleasure or business, was not a thing of easy accomplishment. The great majority of the ex-colonists were French in language, in blood, in feelings, in ideas, in manners, habits, and temperament. They were intensely anxious to retain an autonomy which they fondly believed to have been guaranteed by the treaty of cession. They keenly resented the act of the Federal government which made the English language the official one, and they clung the more tenaciously to the language of their ancestors. Those who had succeeded in mastering the "foreign idiom," as the English was then called, affected to use it only when they could not do otherwise, and only on rare occasions. On the other hand, the Americans, the *aventuriers* (adventurers), as they were designated at that epoch, were intent upon assimilating to themselves as quickly as possible what they looked upon as an extraneous element, which had no right to a prolonged existence. They wanted a fusion in which they would predominate and control. They were determined to absorb, but not to be absorbed. Hence, on the part of the primitive colonial inhabitants, a vigorous resistance to this projected effacement of all the old landmarks of the past *régime* of European domination. Hence also frequent collisions of an unpleasant nature; every friction between these two antagonisms emitted sparks that showed the combustibility of the materials at hand. This want of homogeneity of language and feelings manifested itself in a striking manner in the courts of justice. We proceed, as an illustration of it, to describe faithfully some of the scenes which we witnessed at the New Orleans bar a few years after that

city had become the capital of the State of Louisiana.

For a long while it was almost of absolute necessity that the judges should understand both the English and French languages, and in consequence of the motley composition of our cosmopolite population there was in every court a permanently appointed interpreter, who, as a sworn and regular officer thereof, translated the evidence, the testimony of the witnesses, and, when necessary, the charges of the judge to the jurors. Our jurisprudence was based on the laws of Spain and on the Napoleon Code, which had been adopted by our Legislature with such modifications as had been thought advisable. The commentaries of French and Spanish jurists, with decisions of the tribunals of the two countries of which Louisiana had successively been the colony, were daily and extensively quoted as authorities. The juries being composed of men some of whom did not understand one word of French, and others equally as ignorant of the English, it became imperative on litigants to employ in each case on both sides two lawyers, one speaking French, the other English, and supposed to command individually the sympathies of that portion of the population to which they belonged. Under such circumstances and exigencies the trial of cases was necessarily long and expensive. The petitions and answers, the citations, and all writs whatever, were usually in both languages, and the records containing the testimony of witnesses, and original documents with their indispensable translations, were oppressively voluminous.

Will the reader accompany me to one of the district courts of the old *régime*, and witness some of the judicial proceedings of the epoch? The presiding judge is Joshua Lewis, a high-minded gentleman, if not a profound jurist, who commands universal esteem in the community where he has come to reside. As irreproachable in his private as in his public life, Judge Lewis was born in Kentucky, and did honor both to his native and to his adopted State. When the British invaded Louisiana he hastened to descend from the bench, shouldered his rifle, and