

a child's quick apprehension of the sensuous aspect of things with the natural power of seeing into hearts, he is able to draw with intimate and living force certain basic passions and motives in human form, and achieves creation.

The critic constantly cries there is no longer any art, and there is no one whom he may honor, and it is the critic who is largely responsible for the decadence of the literature of imagination, and who has raised a false standard. The critic has made a fetish of "style"; to the critic, "style" is the life-blood of fiction, and in his microscopic searching for "style," which he weighs and measures with pedantic exactness, he misses the vital. His gaze is fixed afar, and in sweeping the literary firmament for the star in Perseus he crushes underfoot a living thing.

The great novelists have always subordinated plot to creation, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that their characters are so overwhelming that the plot appears of minor importance as compared with the development of character, to which the plot is merely the stage, the

setting, the background, the very costumes which envelop the actors and make them real. No author need fear the charge of plagiarism in plot, for he may go to Shakespeare for his twentieth-century incident of the bond of Shylock, as Shakespeare went to the Italian novelist Florentino of the fifteenth century; as Florentino went to the eighth century, and from the Greek monk Damascenus borrowed from the romance of *Barlaam and Josaphat* the idea of the three caskets; as Sheridan found in Smollett's *Tabitha Bramble* the model for Mrs. Malaprop; as the bards took the contest between David and Goliath as the foundation for many fierce encounters between knights and giants. The modern novelist can hope to find no undiscovered mine of human motive; the world is too old for that, and motives follow too closely well-defined laws for a literary Newton to discover a new principle in human conduct; he cannot hope even to create an absolutely new character, but he can look at things old and things new from the combined standpoint which things old and new together give.

## Summer in the City

BY CHARLES HANSON TOWNE

O DAYS that crush the city's iron heart  
 With heavy heat and burdening gifts of fire,  
 When will ye cease, and when will ye depart,  
 Relentless now with torturing desire?

Night follows night in dull monotony,  
 And the red moon, a lonely lantern, swings  
 High in the heavens, an awful mockery  
 Of her pale sister of the vanished Springs.

O days of death, O pitiless nights of pain,  
 O long battalions with the gleaming sword,  
 Ye shall be vanquished when the ranks of rain  
 Rush from the mighty ramparts of the Lord!

# Alma Does for Herself

BY ANNE UELAND TAYLOR

IT was a strange gift to bring to a woman of twenty-seven: a lump of moist, gray clay, brought home to her by her husband. Yet to Alma Barrett it turned out to be a sort of philosopher's stone, which, by its alchemy, was to re-awaken her to the glory of the earth.

"See if you like this," said Barrett, taking the wrappings off the big package he had placed upon the sitting-room table. Alma hurried in from the dining-room, where she had lingered to blow out the candles.

"Geoffry!" she breathed, locking her hands and bending over it. "You've brought me the clay!"

Barrett stood, watching her amazement and pleasure grow, a quizzical smile on his pleasant, tanned face. She patted the clay with tender pressure of her whole palm, dug her fingers into it, hung brooding over it without a word. Then she turned to him quickly, lifting her hands to his shoulders, showing him a face quite visibly moved—pale, with black brows drawn together, narrowed eyes, and mouth a little tremulous. "Oh, you are the *understandingest* dear!" she said, huskily.

He slipped an arm around her, and held her eyes with his. "You think you can use it?" he demanded.

She returned his challenging look bravely. "I know I can; I know I have it in me," she said.

"You think it will really keep you busy?"

"It will keep me alive!" She turned away from him to contemplate her gift again.

"They said to wrap it up and put it to soak overnight," observed Barrett, looking over her shoulder.

"I'll take care of it. You build a little fire." Alma took the clay away with her.

Barrett had the fire blazing in the grate and a pipe comfortably lit by the time she came back. She threw herself down on the shabby lounge, her elbows on a

cushion and her chin in her hands. She stared brightly at the fire. Barrett, standing at one side of the hearth, looked down at her.

"This has got to do the business," he said, shortly, after a silence.

"What business? Oh, *me*, you mean. Yes, I know. I'm sure it will."

"I mean it's time something came along to keep you busy—desperately busy. I feel as if you were somehow—hungry—ravening—for something to fill your time and your hands. I know I'm not enough. Nothing, so far, has been enough for you. What you want is something to fill your hands. That's the way I dope it out." He puffed away vigorously, still frowning.

"You are quite right," Alma said, and considered it for a moment. Then she went on: "It's what's been giving me such a vixenish temper. You're sweet not to speak of that—but I do think that's been the trouble. Just discontent at not amounting to anything. Just ambition turned in, and then turned out—on you—in horrid ways. What's strange is that you should understand. You have the intuition women are supposed to have. 'Ravening' is just it. I go about ravening for something to devour. This clay you've brought me—"

"And why the deuce haven't you got hold of some before!" he broke in. "Why haven't you?"

"Oh, Geoff—don't ask me that! Don't make me remember my terrible weakness—or how much of a failure I've been, and always would be except for your prodding me. I've always felt sure I could model. I've felt it in my fingers. And if I had ever had the clay at hand—but you can't understand that. When you want to do something well, you do it. You get the materials together and you do it. I have to have everything brought to me. That's dreadful, but it's the way I am! Let me tell you how I am. . . . Fearfully ambitious—for fame