

ROBERT ATTERBURY.*

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SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

ON board the barkentine Santa Mariana is Robert Atterbury, a young Bostonian, whom the first symptoms of inherited consumption have driven to seek the life giving air of the South Pacific. Before he left America, Atterbury, certain of his approaching fate, wrote to his fiancée, Sara Gardner, releasing her from her engagement. Her great love for Robert prompts her to go to him, but she is deterred by the arrival of a letter from her father, from which she learns her life story. At her birth, her mother had become violently insane, and was with difficulty prevented from destroying her infant. A year or two later Mrs. Gardner had died in an asylum, and investigation showed that her terrible disease was hereditary in her family. Mr. Gardner, heart broken, left Sara in charge of her aunt, and settled, self exiled, in Japan. Sara forwards his letter to Robert, and then goes to join her father.

Meanwhile, in Boston, Robert's cousin Claire, the wife of Van Ruger Blethen, is envied by her acquaintances as a fortunate woman, but she is secretly very unhappy. She has discovered evidence of Blethen's infidelity, and, unknown to the world, the relations of husband and wife are greatly strained. The birth of a son fails to effect a real reconciliation, and Claire, whose mother, Mrs. Whitwell, is herself a somewhat cynical woman of the world, instinctively turns for sympathy to her warm friend Jean Sievert, who was the *compagnon de voyage* of Mrs. Whitwell in her journey from Paris.

The Santa Mariana is nearing Australia when Dr. Richards, who is traveling with Atterbury, tells his patient that the progress of his disease has been stayed, and that with care he is likely to live out the full span of life. This unexpected announcement gives Robert new hopes and plans.

XIV.

THE Mariana lay at anchor in the harbor of Sydney. On the deck John and Robert were preparing to go ashore in a small boat. The latter had not carried out his plan of remaining at Apia. He had not improved, indeed had not held his own, after the conversation just recorded. A great restlessness had taken possession of him. The ties which bound him to life—not only to Sara, but to his mother, to Claire, and to all his friends—had asserted themselves, and he wanted to be in the civilized world again, where at least he would be in communication with them.

From Panama John had sent word that all their letters should be forwarded to them at Sydney. Consequently they had not had a line from any one since they had left

home; and now, as they waited for the boat to be gotten ready, it was not the strange city before them that occupied their thoughts, but the packages of letters awaiting them, and containing—what?

An hour later they were sitting in a pleasant room in their hotel, each with a pile of letters and papers before him. John was soon absorbed in his. Robert gathered quickly, from out the mass, those which were in the handwriting that was so dear to him. He arranged them in the order of their postmarks, and, beginning with the earliest, read them through. While he read the pathetic yet courageous words written so many months before by his dear love, Life, the despot, took him in its grasp. It shook him from the lethargy which had been around him; it wrung his heart with agony, and thrilled him with sweetest rapture and with direst pain.

Finally he came to the letter containing the miniature. He gazed at the portrait with astonishment. He did not for an instant think that it was Sara; he knew instinctively that it must be her mother. Then he opened the letter, Mr. Gardner's letter, and read it through.

Suddenly John was startled by the sound of Robert's footsteps. He had risen, and without a word walked rapidly out of the room. Even after the door was shut, the sound of his steps going down the hall came back to John with an unaccustomed ring. They were firm steps, full of purpose; strong, healthful steps.

"Hello!" he said aloud. "I wonder what the deuce is to pay now."

Robert stopped at the clerk's desk.

"Can you tell me how soon a steamer leaves for Japan, and which route is the quickest and most direct?"

The clerk consulted his time table and answered,

"The steamer for Hong Kong sails in an hour, but there will be another in three days. That will probably suit you better, as you have just arrived."

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"I will take the one that sails today," Robert replied. "I am ready now."

XV.

SPRING in Japan; spring almost ready to give place to summer. Everywhere new, fresh green, resting in and rising out from pale, hazy blue. The day was one of spring's triumphs. She seemed to stand on the northern hill tops and beckon gaily to summer, saying, "See how beautiful I have made the earth to welcome you!"

Sara and her father walked slowly along a road which, with many curves, and now and then a short flight of steps, went up one of the hills which rise above the harbor and town of Nagasaki. The Feast of the Cherry Blossoms was in full celebration, and they had been for a long walk, to enjoy the enchanting beauty of the season, and to take what part they could in the general holiday. Everywhere under the great flower laden trees were groups of merry people. Their light hearted chattering and soft laughter were as much in keeping with the day as were the songs of the birds and the busy fluttering of the butterflies.

Wherever Mr. Gardner and his daughter appeared, they were received with kindest greeting. The dainty little people, their faces wreathed in smiles, their long eyes bright with pleasure, came forward to meet their guests, and with many compliments offered them cakes and tea. They knew Mr. Gardner well. He had lived among them many years, and they showed a respect for him which was almost reverence. He stopped for a little while wherever he recognized acquaintances, and talked to them in their own language, which was to him as his own.

Sara as yet understood very little of the language, but she had grown quite accustomed to the outspoken admiration with which the pretty little Japanese girls gathered around her, touching now her bright hair, now some part of her dress which pleased them, and murmuring "*Kireno, ah kireno.*" Her father's intercourse with the Japanese was a constant source of surprise to her. He associated with them just as he would have done if he had been Japanese or they American. She had not yet gotten over the idea that they belonged to an altogether different world from her own, even if that world was a very charming one.

The day was waning now, and she and her father had started for their home, which was well up on the hillside, and looked down over the feathery bamboo trees and

away to the inland sea. One of the turns in the road brought them in sight of the water. A great ocean steamer was just off the wharf. It was surrounded by sampans, which were ready to land the passengers, if there chanced to be any. Mr. Gardner stood looking at the busy scene.

"It is the steamer from Hong Kong," he said. "She has had a quick run."

When they walked on, Sara put one hand through her father's arm and clasped the other one around it. She looked up into his worn, disfigured face, and, as always, the sight of it brought to her the full realization of his long years of self repression and loneliness. A great tenderness for him filled her heart. She listened attentively while he talked of the day, and of other holidays of this eastern people. He constantly tried to awaken in her a real interest in the Japanese, and for his sake she tried to be interested. He was sure that if he could rouse her to an active study of their manners and habits, of their wonderful old art, in which he was deeply versed, of their calm and sweet religion, or indeed of anything else, it would at least soften the melancholy which he could not help but see in her eyes. On her part she met every request with ready acquiescence, every anxious look with a smile, and imagined that she had deceived him into thinking her at least contented.

When they reached home he went in at once, and started up the stairs that led to their sitting room. Seeing that she did not follow, he came back.

"Are you coming up, daughter?" he asked.

"Not just now, father dear," she answered.

She smiled at him, and he left her. Then she sat down on the edge of the porch, and let her eyes wander vaguely off toward the east. The light died out of her face, and a sadness so profound took its place that all her youth fell from her, and she seemed like a statue of despair.

Down at the wharf the steamer had already gone on her way, having landed her passengers. There were only a few of them, and they were soon in the jinrikishas on their way to the hotels. As each trunk and valise had to have a separate 'rikisha, there was quite a procession when the *kurumaya* runners started off at their accustomed trot. Presently one of them left the line, and, slowing down, began to ascend the road over which Sara and her father had just passed. Whenever a curve in the road made Mr. Gardner's house visible, the

kurumaya stopped and pointed upwards. Just at one of these places was a flight of steps which perceptibly shortened the way. The newcomer called to his runner to stop, and, getting out of the *'rikisha*, paid and dismissed him. Then he went up the steps.

Something in his movements attracted Sara's attention, and she looked down. Who and what was this? She grew whiter, if she could be whiter than before, and a look of fright was added to the pain already in her face. Still he came on, not walking fast, but with a swinging step and evident impatience. Now he disappeared behind a clump of bamboo. She rose to her feet and clasped her hands tightly together. She thought she must be dreaming, or perhaps—and the great dread of her life took hold of her. Now he stepped out from the road, he was only a few yards away. It was Robert, really Robert, with glad eyes, coming toward her, holding out his hands. She put up one hand as if to ward something off, and stared at him wildly.

"Robert! You here!" she whispered.

He took her trembling hands in his, and held them fast.

"Here?" he said. "Yes, my love. Did you not know that I should come? You did not think that I could be alive and not come to you? I am alive, thank God, and here to take care of you, and never, never to leave you again."

Her eyes were fixed on his with a look of passionate prayer, as if to say, "Do not deceive me; I have borne despair, I cannot bear false hope." They drank courage from his steadfast, tender gaze, but she only said,

"I do not understand. You gave me up when you were ill and I did not know, and now——"

Robert put his arm around her and drew her close to him.

"I gave you up, dearest, when I thought that you were well, and that it would be wrong for me to marry you. Now, do you not see, darling, dearest one, that we are equal; that your trouble brings us together again, and gives me the double right to be near you; that you need me, and that there is no one else in the world who can comfort you?"

They were sitting side by side on the edge of the low porch, and the shadows of night were falling around them. While Robert talked to her, telling her of his illness, his voyage, of finding her letters, and the haste he had made to reach her, a constant transformation went on in her. At last he knelt

beside her and clasped his arms closely around her.

"I have come to you, my life, my love," he said. "I will be husband and children to you, you shall be wife and children to me, and we will be together always, *always*, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, so long as we both shall live."

While he spoke, she bent slowly down to his radiant face, in which love and faith triumphed over fate; and when her lips met his, she repeated softly, "So long as we both shall live."

XVI.

THE dawn of the next day was like a resurrection morning to Sara. She rose to meet a new world and a new life. She went down and out into the clear spring morning, and there on the porch Robert was waiting for her. They looked into each other's eyes, and the whole universe seemed to be clothed in gladness. Their understanding of each other was so perfect that it was easy for Robert to show Sara the conclusions he had reached in his long pondering of the problems of life and marriage, and she accepted with joy and thankfulness the solution that left her Robert's tender love and constant companionship.

Mr. Gardner was inclined to be not only dissatisfied but angry when he first found who had come, and learned that he had come to stay. They talked the position over quietly and exhaustively. Robert explained his views, and found that Mr. Gardner was not inclined to accept the possibility of such a marriage as that which he proposed.

"There need be no question of marriage," Robert finally said. "I am not in a condition which would make it right that I should have children; neither is Sara; but we love each other. Is it a reason for sacrificing both our lives, that we cannot desire to have children? I make no appeal to you for myself, but I ask you candidly, does she not need me? Do you not already see that she is better, and is it not probable, with me to help her, that she will escape the trouble which you fear for her?"

Mr. Gardner could not deny that this was true. He consented that Robert should stay for a short time.

Robert and Sara smiled at this decision. They did not need that any one else should understand them. They were one, and rested in their love. Their new life began at once. Robert found a little house, higher

up on the hill, where he established himself. Each morning he came down to breakfast with Sara. He came in like the sun that rises above the sea, and Sara's eyes filled with light and love as the earth fills with the day. Mr. Gardner was conscious that he too lived in a new world, and he soon grew accustomed to watch for the morning greeting which passed between the eyes of these lovers; and when he caught it he felt that a benediction had fallen upon him and them.

Robert at once became intensely interested in Mr. Gardner's Japanese lore, and at last it fell to this long suffering man to have an appreciative companion, to whom he could reveal the treasures of knowledge which had been fruitlessly stored in his mind for all the years of his wanderings in Egypt, in India and China, and lastly in Japan. Robert, and now Sara also, plunged into the study of the Japanese language and art, Mr. Gardner being their guide and teacher. An air of activity and life took possession of the hitherto solemn house, and sounds of music and laughter banished the silence that had reigned there.

Besides his work with Mr. Gardner, Robert also resumed the series of letters or papers which he had begun to write on the ship. He brought this work also to the pleasant, half closed porch where Sara usually sat. He would not be separated from her except when it was unavoidable.

One day, coming in with a bundle of papers in his hand, he found Sara dressed in complete Japanese costume. She wore a lovely kimono of pale green crêpe, fantastically and gorgeously embroidered. Her hair was combed high up on her head in the approved Japanese style, and she was sitting on the floor, opposite to a little Japanese girl, who was giving her a lesson on the *samisen*. She arose as he came in, and bowed before him until her sleeves touched the floor, drawing in her breath and bidding him welcome in Japanese. He laughed at the quaint picture, and then seated himself a little way off and began to write. Sara was comically droning out a song in a little voice as much like her teacher's as she could make her own. Looking up to see Robert laugh at her, she surprised him pressing his hand to his side. She rose instantly, and sent her little teacher away, saying that she could sing no longer. Going to Robert, she took the pen from his hand and knelt beside him. Her eyes asked the question her lips could not utter.

"It is nothing, dearest," he said. "Only a trifling pain—a sort of reminiscence of

pain, rather. Do not be troubled; I have too much to live for to be ill again."

"It is the writing," she said. "I wonder that I have let you do it." Taking the pen in her hand she seated herself on the floor. "Dictate," she went on. "I will take it in shorthand, and then write it out for you."

"Can you write in shorthand?" he asked, surprised.

"Certainly," she said. "I did all my dictations in shorthand my last two years in college, and all the lectures too. You may have to speak slowly at first, because I am out of practice."

Robert threw himself down upon a long bamboo chair, so as to be on a level with his amanuensis, and began to dictate. They worked in this way for some time without interruption. It seemed to both of them that their thoughts were one. Sara divined the words almost before they were spoken, and Robert seemed to himself to have a new sense, a kind of intuition, which reached out into the realms of thought and laid the secrets of life simple and bare before him. After an hour or two had passed, Sara laid the pen down and looked at him with eyes full of tenderest love.

"Oh, Robert, how happy we are!" she said.

XVII.

TIME passed quietly and quickly now. The days were so filled with work and pleasure that they slipped by uncounted. Robert and Sara drank deeply of the cup of life, whose ceaseless upflowing is joy. It was only by noting the changes in themselves and those around them that the passage of time could be seen. Strangely, in no one was change more noticeable than in Mr. Gardner. The deep fold in his brow smoothed itself out, the look of stern self repression left his mouth. He was interested in every detail of their life, and took the keenest delight in planning excursions into the interior. Many times, as he retraced with his light hearted companions the paths which years before he had passed over only to wear out the weary day, he marveled to find the world so beautiful. He did not have the air of an old man who wishes to give pleasure to his children, but rather that of one who finds intense enjoyment in everything himself. Sara, watching him, saw that it was his lost youth returning, and she realized that this father who had spent the best years of his life alone and sorrowful, had been born to be a light hearted, happy man. She redoubled her efforts to atone to him for the past.

As for Robert, he grew stronger day by day. No one would have thought of calling him an invalid—this bronzed man who strode over the hills with the step of an athlete. His mind was absorbingly occupied with his work. As in the temple of life one hall opens ever into another and more lofty one, so to his mind each new truth he learned led to another and greater, and one life seemed all too short in which to declare the height and depth of the love of God as it was being revealed to him in His law.

A call from the outside roused them to a consciousness of the world beyond them. Robert received a letter from his friend, the Boston publisher.

"I have been hoping to hear," he said, "that you were ready to return to your own country. There is need for you here, and however much you may do with your pen from the orient, there is no question that you could be much more useful here, and, if your health is sufficiently restored, that your place is here. I am moved to write this to you now, because of certain special circumstances. Hughson, of the *Washington Standard*, is about to retire, and the syndicate has applied to me for suggestions as to his successor. I know that it would be unwise for you to attempt to live in Boston, but the climate of Washington is mild, except for a little while each year, and I think you would be able to endure it safely. This makes it possible, and then come the other considerations, namely, that as one of the department editors of the *Standard*, you would have a strong position from which to carry on your work; and also that if you were here, in the field, there would surely open before you a personal career of usefulness and importance. Think of it, and let me know your decision as soon as possible. I can hold the position for you for a little while, but of course, if you decide to accept, it will be necessary for you to come at once."

To Robert and Sara there was no difficulty in deciding the question on its merits. If Robert's health was so far established that it would be safe for him to return home, it was best that he should do so. Sara's ambition took fire at once at the thought of what Robert might be and do in the great world of men and events; but there was a great obstacle—it might well be an insurmountable one. What would it mean to Mr. Gardner?

"Let us take the letter to father," Sara said, after they had sat silently thinking for some time.

Mr. Gardner read the letter through; then, rising from his chair, he walked slowly back and forth on the porch, pausing to look off at the stretch of water and the clustering houses below him. His mind reviewed the years he had spent in this place. He recalled his first coming; the feeling which he had then had, that this was an asylum for him in which he could wait for the end; and the stretch of long, weary years that had passed, to blossom at last into the un hoped for, inconceivable happiness of the last year and a half. He did not hesitate. The place was dear, but it was only the outside. The real thing was the human love which gave it value. He went to Robert and laid his hand on his friend's shoulder.

"I know you are thinking of me," he said. "You need not, my son. I will go with you. It will be good for me to see my native land again."

It was the first time that he had spoken to Robert by that name, and Sara put her arms around his neck and kissed him, while tears of joy stood in her eyes.

Mr. Gardner had a marvelous collection of art treasures, and the packing was an affair of great importance. No one except the gentle handed Japanese themselves are to be trusted in handling these fragile beauties. Robert was, of course, worse than useless, he was in the way; therefore it happened that he sat alone, one evening, just in the gloaming. He was on the porch, hidden from view of passers by a folding screen. Within, Sara was singing a happy little song as she went busily about. It formed a fit sort of accompaniment to Robert's happy thoughts. A party of tourists came slowly down from the hill top, and, seeing the unusual stir about the house, paused for a moment. It was a woman's voice that spoke.

"This is the house where the tall American lives, the one who has such a beautiful wife, is it not?"

It was another woman's voice that answered, in a cruel, laughing tone, "Beautiful, if you will, but certainly not wife."

"Why," said the first, "you don't mean that there is anything wrong about that woman? I would have said it was utterly impossible."

"Appearances are often deceitful, my dear, and it happens that I know for a certainty that of which I speak," the same hard voice replied.

They had been gone for some time when Robert rose to his feet. He went directly to Mr. Gardner.

"I would like to speak to you. Can you sit down for a little while?"

Mr. Gardner saw that Robert's manner was serious. Instantly he laid down the precious lacquer he was wrapping, and sat down to listen. Robert did not tell him what he had just overheard, not considering it necessary to annoy him.

"I have been thinking that before we leave Japan it will be wise that Sara and I should be married," he said. "It is the only way that our life, which we have found so happy, can go on." A shade of anxiety crossed Mr. Gardner's face. "The simple performance of the marriage ceremony will make no difference to us; it will give Sara my name, and our relation will not be questioned by the outside world."

This is the way in which it came about that on one morning, when the *Gallic* sailed from Yokohama, bound for San Francisco, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Atterbury stood on the deck beside Mr. Gardner, and watched the land slowly sink down into the sea, until nothing of their first home remained to their sight except the crest of Fuji-yama.

XVIII.

THE Blethen mansion was ablaze with lights. Mr. and Mrs. P. Van Ruger Blethen were giving a reception to their cousin, Mr. Robert Atterbury, and his bride. Everybody who was anybody was there or on his way there, and the scene was very gay and brilliant.

"The beautiful Mrs. Blethen," as she was almost universally called, was never more beautiful than tonight. There were no visible lines in her perfect face, there was no suggestion of ennui or weariness in her perfect manner, as she greeted her guests and turned to present them to Sara. Some might have said that she was cold and haughty in her bearing; an admirer would have said that her repose and self poise were wonderful.

You and I are permitted to join this throng, and to scrutinize, more closely than would be possible if we were seen ourselves, the beautiful women and courtly men who enter here. As soon as our eyes are accustomed to the brilliant procession, and our ears have learned to detect tones and undertones in this constant flow of compliment and greeting, we find here strange things. There is a not quite disguised toleration in the manner of some toward Blethen. He stands, as in duty bound, near his wife, and receives their guests with her, but he has lost the easy

self possession that used to be one of his chief characteristics. Sometimes there is a faintly perceptible scorn under the smiles and compliments that are lavished on Claire, and more than once we note the glance of an eye which seems to pass from her to the statue-like form of Jean Sievert.

M. Sievert is leaning indolently against the side of a door, at a little distance from the family group. He appears to notice no one in the room except Claire. His eyes are fixed on her face, and he is alert to catch the least glance of her eye. Although Claire does not look toward him, we know that she recognizes that he is there; we know, too, that Blethen feels the Frenchman's presence, and that it is this that gives him the uncertain, uneasy air we noticed at first.

As we scan the guests, we are at once struck by the involuntary change that passes over each one who, turning from the lovely hostess, meets Sara's eyes. After a little we begin to divide the crowd into two groups; those who shrink, ever so little, abashed before the simple nobility of her face and bearing, and those whose sympathetic natures recognize at once the presence of one to whom they gladly pay homage.

As for Sara, she is simply and truly glad and happy. In all this crowd she sees only her husband's old friends, who for his sake are kind to her. There is to her an exhilarating promise in her surroundings. She feels herself at home again after long absence, and is saying to herself that it is here, among their own people, in their own country, that Robert is to find the career of usefulness and success that is now a well formed ambition in her mind. Her gladness sheds itself on all around her, and replaces with quite a new element the elegant indifference usual on such occasions.

Later in the evening, when the crowd forms little groups here and there, it is interesting to see those who come to claim a few minutes' conversation with Sara, and those who stand a little way off, looking at her with curious eyes. More than once Robert sees Claire gazing at his wife with a strange, wistful question in her face.

Among the guests are a number of old men, and without exception they gather in the group that surrounds Sara. They come to offer to her the most sincere worship that youth and beauty ever receive—that of wisdom and experience, which in all their length of days has found nothing else that can compare with her. So they come, as they always do, to lay their offerings at her

feet. Here they meet something new ; something more than the ordinary careless acceptance with which youth is wont to gather up its store of adulation. Her quick sympathy goes out to them, to each one of them. The tone of her voice, which is not afraid to be tender, the light in her eyes which has no need to hide its love and kindness for every one, are like a blessing to all around her. One of these aged men, whose silver hair has long been a crown which the nation has delighted to honor, when going away, placed his hand lightly on her head.

"God bless you, dear child," he says, "and keep your heart always as sweet as now!"

XIX.

THE guests were gone, the servants were turning out the lights. Blethen, after waiting for a moment to see if Sievert were coming, had taken his way to the club. Claire sat with her hands under her head, leaning back in an easy chair. Her attitude was one that betokened great fatigue, and now there were heavy shadows under her eyes and faint lines at their corners. Sievert stood silently waiting for her to move or speak, that he might bid her good by. He had formed the habit of being always the last to leave her, the last to say good night. It was little, and society, which had already whispered its doubts and expectations, would have been surprised had it known that between these two, who were almost inseparable, there had passed no word that might not have been spoken aloud in any presence. Words are indeed not needed ; under such circumstances they are worse than useless. Jean knew that his whole life was swayed by his passion for Claire. He had been attracted to her at first by her beauty and her loneliness, and with the easy conscience of his kind he had let himself drift into an absorbing passion, which drew him back to her no matter how often he took himself away. What he did not know, because she was too wise to let him see it, was that life was empty to her without him, and that only in his presence did she feel that she was human.

He was a man who had little to learn of human nature, especially of his own ; and because he loved her so intensely he forbore to speak. He knew that for him the spell would begin to lose its hold when she should yield. His inscrutable, almost solemn eyes studied her closely, and it was the stern, inflexible part of her character, which

had come to her from her Puritan ancestors, that was her chief fascination, because it was this that always made him doubtful as to the result. He also knew that once such a nature as hers had lost its proud self respect, it would lose its grace and infinite charm. Such is the strange inconsistency of man, that while he formed no resolution to spare her ultimately, yet the pity for it, for his own intolerable ennui as well as for her misery and despair, restrained expression of the passionate longing which he felt. He preferred to hold himself as long as possible in the delicious uncertainty in which hope alternates with fear.

She turned her melancholy eyes upon him.

"Do you know what it is, Sievert?" she said. "What secret of life has she found out? What do they both know that the rest of the world is ignorant of? Robert is as she is, and I"—she paused a moment, and her voice was almost a sob—"I did not know until tonight that *any one* was happy."

He did not answer, but something in his manner warned her. She rose to her feet, her face again wearing its mask of smiles.

"Good night," she said, "and thank you for all your assistance. You are always the same kind friend."

XX.

SIEVERT, going as usual to call upon Claire the next afternoon, found the carriage drawn up in front of the door. He was quite accustomed to going out with her when she paid visits, but had thought she would be too much fatigued to go today. He went in and waited for a few minutes ; she came down with her bonnet on.

"I am indeed glad that you are rested enough to go out," he said, looking at her with the expression of careful tenderness which he permitted himself to wear when they were alone.

She was restless. There was an unusual flush on her cheek, and a passionate excitement in her eyes.

"I am going to my aunt's, to see Robert's wife," she said.

"And I, may I have the pleasure of accompanying you?" he asked.

The flush deepened a little.

"No, I think not today, if you please," she replied. "I am taking Whitwell, and it would not be pleasant for you to go with the child. I shall be at home again at five. Come then for tea, will you not?"

He bowed his acquiescence in whatever

she chose to do. He had never known her to take her child out with her before. Indeed, he never thought of the child as hers, but only vaguely as Blethen's. Blethen was fond of the boy, often took him to drive, and talked constantly of him to his acquaintances. Now, as Sievert stood contemplating Claire, he understood what was going on in her mind—that she was, probably half unconsciously, using the child to bring herself into closer relation with Sara. He recognized all at once the hopeless dreariness of her life, and for the moment at least felt all the passionate anger which was surging through her soul. He went close to her and held out his hand.

"Yes, I will come at five; but you, are you still asking the question of last night? You need not go to her to have it answered. There is only one answer—only one, and that is waiting for you here, always."

She drew her hand away and averted her eyes. She was so wretched, and she would not let him see the battle she was fighting. Nancy came in with Whitwell, and she bade Jean *au revoir* and drove away.

They entered Mrs. Atterbury's sitting room, and Whitwell walked immediately to her side, and put his hand in hers. He always called her "grandmother," and indeed he found the pleasure and happiness of his life in her house, where he was perfectly at home. That he was a sturdy, healthy little fellow, light hearted and happy as a child should be, was almost entirely owing to the care she had given him, and to the fortunate neglect of his parents. They counted for almost nothing in his wholesome life, of which "grandma" and Nancy were the good angels.

Claire seated herself and called to him to come to her. She had some vague idea that she would talk to Sara about him, and she wanted to hear Sara talk; she wanted, if possible, to understand her. The child paid no attention to his mother, but stood with one little elbow on the arm of Mrs. Atterbury's chair, looking gravely around the room.

There were a number of people present, and Sara was at the other end of the room, evidently absorbed in the conversation going on there. Robert drew a chair near to Claire's, and began to talk to her. His eyes, full of sympathy, the tone of his voice, which seemed to her full of pity for her, almost maddened her. At last she broke out: "Robert, tell me, what is it that makes you and Sara so different from all the world? Is it something real, or do you only appear to be so impossibly happy?"

Robert looked over to where Sara was sitting before he answered, and Claire followed his glance. Whitwell had left his place at his grandmother's side, and, crossing directly through the room, had climbed into Sara's lap. He laid his head on her breast and gazed straight into her face with an expression of perfect content. At the moment when Robert and Claire looked at them, Sara, bending over him, kissed him fondly, and he put his arm tightly around her neck. Claire turned very pale, and rose from her chair. She felt smothered, and feared that some cry of pain would escape her lips.

"I must go," she said. "Tell Nancy to bring him home."

She went out alone.

XXI.

THE Atterburys made but a brief stay in Boston. Robert obtained the position of which his friend had written, and when they had paid a short visit to his old home they, accompanied by Mr. Gardner, went to live in Washington.

Robert's enthusiasm and ambition were great, not only to fill the place for which his friend had vouched for his fitness, but to make it of greater and farther reaching importance. He gave himself vigorously to this work, but it was not first nor of chief importance in his life. Here and now he and Sara were to build their home, and they both brought to the undertaking all their intelligence.

They had in themselves, in their united life, the indispensable corner stone upon which must rest every happy domestic hearth. They understood by "home" far more than physical comfort and pleasure, far more than even domestic happiness for themselves. To them "home" was a shrine where all who came were to be blessed, a sacred fire, always bright and clear, where every brother and sister might find light and warmth. This kind of home they made, working with undivided interest, and giving to it the best within themselves. At first it was in a small house which they found in Washington; but after a few months of careful consideration of localities, Mr. Gardner bought for them a place on one of the hillsides a little way out of the city.

It had an air of quiet, almost of country life, while below it, in full view from the windows and veranda, lay the beautiful city with its noble avenues and the stately domes that always remind the spectator of

the dignity of its place in the nation and among nations. The place was not new, which was fortunate, because the lawn that sloped away from the broad veranda was soft as velvet, and the trees that threw their shadows on the grass were tall and venerable. Mr. Gardner had lived too long in oriental countries to feel quite at home in an ordinary, conventional house in the United States. He built for himself and his art collections a wing which combined the luxury of India with modern conveniences. Sara and Robert arranged their own part of the house to suit themselves. In all that they did, they never lost sight of the fact that the adornment of the house was only an outside matter; and while it was a great delight to them to make it expressive of themselves, they knew that the true ornaments of a home are its friends.

There is no place in the world where the opportunities for making an ideal home are greater than in Washington. The variety in the charming and interesting people to be found there leaves nothing to be desired, as far as material is concerned. These they gathered into their home, not so much by what they did for people as by the subtle influence of what they were. It would have puzzled many to define why they always went to the Atterburys' with joy, and came away refreshed and comforted. Many a care worn statesman who took his way to their house as a matter of course, when he had a brief leisure, never stopped, perhaps, to analyze the rest and peace he found there.

Time gave permanence to all these joys. Living became synonymous with growing and developing. Naturally, as must happen to every American in a like position, Robert was drawn more and more into political work. He studied statesmanship from the point of view of an American citizen who recognizes the strengths and weaknesses of our people, and seeks the good of the whole country. He wielded a strong and virile pen, and its power came to be felt and acknowledged. In all that he did and strove to do, Sara had a part—not merely that of wifely interest, but of intelligent coöperation. They went hand in hand, and often neither could have told which had first had the important idea, or whose expression had been the forceful way of putting it before the public.

As Robert's work took his time more completely, Sara became more fully occupied with social duties. She was interested in every one and everything, and it would not have been possible to her to

turn away from any one leaving the impression behind her that she did not care. In her house was always to be found real society, which is a rare thing in these days.

However occupied or absorbed they were, they always kept the best of themselves for each other. The early morning was sacred. They walked or rode about the lovely country, or, if the weather did not permit them to be out of doors, they sat together in their private sitting room. What more or better can you say of a man's life than is expressed in this?—Robert was satisfied.

Was Sara satisfied? At least she did not know that she was not.

XXII.

THEY had just come through an exciting political campaign, and Robert's work had brought him very near to some of the greatest men of the nation. He was intensely interested in the movement of events. He knew that these men depended upon him in certain ways, and he felt himself a responsible part of the important affairs of the nation. All this did not take him away from Sara in any true sense of the word, but it took his time, and more or less his thoughts.

Sara was sometimes restless, and could not account to herself for her feelings. Too much of her time was her own to dispose of as she felt inclined. While she was never at a loss to find employment, it was, nevertheless, arbitrary employment, and she had times of longing for duties which should take possession of her, and make work a necessity.

One of the results of the late election had been to bring her cousin, Margaret Hunter, to live in Washington. Margaret's husband was now quite a successful lawyer, but his ambition was not satisfied, and he had decided that it never would be satisfied by any success for which he could hope at the bar. Therefore he had turned his attention to the political arena. Here he had achieved his first triumph; he had been elected to the House of Representatives; and being still a young man, he looked forward to the future with boundless ambition.

It was a great pleasure to Sara to welcome Margaret to Washington. She had seen her for a few days when she passed through San Francisco, on her way from Japan, and they had been constant correspondents. They were entirely different in nature and in training, but in affection they were sisters, and all the details of Margaret's life

were of importance to Sara. She supposed that she understood them, and would have been surprised to find that she really neither knew nor understood her cousin.

Margaret had loved her husband with a calm, passionless affection, and he had accepted this love as all he could ask, because he supposed it to be all that her nature was capable of. It made no great demands upon him, and even in the first year of their married life his business was allowed to claim the first place in his attention. Then a child was born. Joseph Hunter was a man of quick understanding, and it was also a part of his professional training to read people's characters by their actions. When he saw Margaret with her child, when he heard the tones of her voice as she talked to it, he realized all at once how little he had known of her real nature, and that he had never touched the depths of her heart. He was shocked, and perhaps mortified as well, but it seemed to him ridiculous to put himself forward as the rival of his own child. He retired more and more into himself—which is another way of saying that he buried himself more and more in his business—and made no sign. After two years another child was born, and Margaret, all unconscious of her shortcomings as a wife, was wholly absorbed in her children. She did not dream that her husband spent lonely hours in the library which he would gladly have given to her.

The end came suddenly and terribly. The terror which walketh at noonday entered their house. Both children had diphtheria, and after three days of indescribable agony Margaret's arms were empty and her heart desolate. She turned to her husband now, and sorrow united the lives which prosperity had left separate. Joseph found the sweetest hours of his life those in which he held his stricken wife in his arms and felt that he could comfort her.

This sorrow was a year old when they came to live in Washington. Sara had sympathized with Margaret in her loss, but was not prepared for the change it had made in her. She was thin and worn, the gray hair showed on her temples, and she went about almost without a smile. She seemed to be always living over those terrible days, and to be utterly unable to interest herself in anything else. Sara could not understand such hopeless grief, but this did not prevent her from devoting herself to the task of comforting her cousin. She was untiring in her labor of love. Sometimes Robert thought the improvement in Margaret was hardly enough to compensate for the great

exhaustion to Sara, but he would not say anything that could put any bounds to the bountiful outgoing of Sara's rich nature.

So the winter and spring passed, and summer was there. One day Margaret sat with Sara on the veranda, which looked out over the lawn and down to where the river shone in the sunshine. It was warm, and a faint haze spread over all the valley below them, softening the outlines.

Margaret, as usual, talked of her children, telling over all their little childish ways and sayings, and Sara, feeling that it was best to let the sad heart have its own way, listened sympathetically.

"It is very strange that you have never had any children, Sara. I do not think I should feel that I had really ever lived if I had not had mine." Sara's face flushed and she turned away while Margaret went on. "Of course one child can never take the place of another, and nothing can ever console me for the loss of mine, but it does help me to bear it that I expect another so soon. You cannot know how impatient I am for the time to come."

Sara made a great effort and tried to lead Margaret to speak of the expected one, and by and by the conversation became quite cheerful.

That night, when Robert came home, he found a strange restlessness about Sara. He talked to her of all that he had seen and done during the day, but she showed little interest. Usually she said to him, "Begin at the beginning and tell me all that has happened," but tonight, for the first time in her life, her attention wandered and she asked nothing.

"Are you not well, dearest?" he asked anxiously.

She made an effort to bring her wandering thoughts back, and smiled at him, but he was almost sure that he saw tears in her eyes. However, she said that it was nothing. Coming in, a day or two later, he was surprised to find her sewing. He disliked to see her sew, and she did not herself care to do it; it was rare for her to do more than fasten on a button, or something of that sort. He went toward her, and was still more surprised to see her put the hand that held the work behind her. He stopped short.

"What is it? Something which I may not see?" he asked.

She laughed and blushed shyly.

"Oh, no. You may see it. It is for Margaret's baby."

She held the dainty garment of lace and muslin up for his inspection. Robert stood

looking down upon her. There was a look in her face that sent a pang through his heart. What was it? Was she not satisfied, as he was? Was his love not sufficient for her? He stooped and gathered her in his arms.

"My precious wife, my dear, brave, true wife!" he said.

She folded the work up, and rose to her feet. They went out on the veranda; she clasped her hands over his arm, and they walked under the stars until late in the evening. When they came in, and she said good night to him, her eyes were calm and happy, and looked straight into his. Robert watched her with anxiety for the next few days, but she was all her own sweet self, and his fears were quieted.

Weeks passed and brought the important day; in Margaret's arms lay a little daughter. Sara had been with her almost every day, and had shared the joys of anticipation; she had also given her promise to be the baby's godmother. Now, however, she did not go to see it. Each day she sent flowers, with messages of love and congratulation, but always with some excuse—that she was very busy, or tired, or not very well. Margaret wondered, but did not divine the cause. The days were rather long for her, especially since Joseph, feeling that he was not needed at home, had gone away for a little holiday. A friend, the owner of the yacht *Vivien*, had invited him to go for a week's sail along the coast, and Margaret had urged him to accept.

One day, when the baby was two weeks old, Margaret had it dressed in a lovely gown which was Sara's gift, and, with many careful instructions to the nurse and coachman, sent it to call upon Sara.

The day was sultry. There was languor in the air and on the earth. The leaves of the trees hung limp, and the butterflies lay breathless on the great dahlias. For days Sara had with difficulty repressed the pain that consumed her. If she could have gone to Robert, all would have been well, but her greatest care was to hide it from him. After all their blessed life together, was she to ruin all? Could she be so wicked, so ungrateful? So reasoning, she put a fierce control upon herself when she was with him; when he went away she gave way to bitter grief.

On this morning she had risen with a dull pain in her head, and a feeling of irritability which made her wish to avoid every one, for fear that she might say or do some unkind thing. She told Robert that she would not ride or walk, and turned away from his questioning almost fretfully. When she

saw him mount his horse and ride away alone, she threw herself on her couch and sobbed, saying to herself that even Robert no longer loved her, yet knowing all the time how absurd such thought was. She cried for an hour, and then her head ached so badly that she darkened her room and said that she would not see any one. When Robert returned from his ride the servant told him that she was sleeping, and did not wish to be disturbed. With a heavy foreboding he went to his work. It was the first day in all their married life which had not been blessed by their morning's pleasure taken together.

The day wore on. Sara slept a little and wept much. Shortly after noon the maid came into the room, bringing her a tiny note from Margaret Hunter. She opened one of the blinds and read the miniature card: "Baby Margaret makes her first visit to her godmother."

"Please, mum, de nuss have brought de baby," the servant said.

Sara began to tremble, but she went out on the veranda where the black nurse sat holding a parasol over the sleeping child. She took the baby, and, telling the nurse to wait where she was, went back into her own room and shut the door.

Meanwhile Robert found it impossible to work. He longed to see his wife, to comfort her if he could, or to share her pain, so he went home. He drove up to the side of the house, and, stepping lightly on to the veranda, came suddenly to the open French window of her sitting room. The wind stirred the curtain a little; just as he was about to lift it and go in, there appeared before him a sight which stayed his feet and made him cold with fear.

At the side of a low couch which stood at the end of the room, Sara knelt, her face toward him. On the couch before her lay a sleeping child. She was flushed and excited. With trembling fingers she untied the baby's cloak; folded it back; then took its cap from its head. She bent over it with a look of adoration, and covered its tiny hands with hungry kisses. Suddenly she put her hands to her own throat, and, opening her dress, laid bare her virgin breast. Drawing a low chair beside the couch and seating herself, she took the baby up and laid its head upon her bosom. Its little hand, held tight in hers, she continually covered with kisses. Then, in a moment, she began to sing a low sweet lullaby.

Robert dropped the curtain and moved noiselessly away. He gained his own room,

and shut the door on the misery which overwhelmed him. Outside, on the veranda, the nurse and Marie were indulging in the gossip so dear to their hearts. The air was stifling; as they talked, first one and then the other wiped beads of perspiration from her face.

"Mercy on us," exclaimed the nurse, "'pears to me it's late in the season to be so hot. 'Pears like one can't git dere bref, nohow."

"Looks like dere gwine ter be a change, any way," answered Marie, pointing to the south.

Just showing its pointed edge above the trees, there was a cloud, slowly rising. In its path, apparently motionless, was a small leaden mass of vapor which had in its very immobility an air of menace. The face of the nurse grew almost white.

"'Fore de Lord, dere's gwine ter be thunder an' lightnin'," she exclaimed. "I mus' git home with de baby. Oh, bress de Lord, what's I gwine ter do ef I doesn't git home fust?"

In the silent room, still rocking the child, Sara was oblivious of all that passed. Her song had ceased, but she still held the little fingers curled around her own, and her face was as the face of a madonna. There came a hurried knock at the door. She laid the baby on her lap, and at the same instant closed her dress. She looked round with a frightened air, as of one who awakens in a strange place. The nurse entered, and hurriedly put the child's wraps on. She talked incessantly as she hurried, saying that the baby's mother would be anxious, and that she was sure the horses were afraid of thunder. In a very few minutes she went out with the baby, followed in a dazed sort of way by Sara. The coachman, who had been waiting in the shade of the trees, came up, and in an instant they drove rapidly away.

Robert, torn by conflicting emotions, had been watching from a window which looked out upon the veranda. He did not wish to go to Sara's room while she had the child, nor was he willing to leave her alone for a moment after it was gone. He saw the nurse get into the carriage with it and drive away, saw Sara stand for a moment looking after them, and then go into her room. Thinking to startle her less by coming in at the front door, he put on his hat and went out; then, coming up the front steps rather noisily, to attract her attention, he entered her room. She was not there.

Robert passed through into the next room and out into the hall. He did not find her. He called her name, asked the servants. No one had seen her. Now thoroughly alarmed, he went to Mr. Gardner's room to see if she were there. The expression of Robert's face communicated his fear to her father, and both of them set about the search for her, a mingling of love and fear straining every nerve to its utmost tension.

Sara had indeed walked into her room, and, still almost in a stupor, conscious only that she was suffocating and must have air, had picked up a broad sun hat and passed directly out of the window where Robert had stood watching her. She went out toward the back of the place, where in a moment she was hidden from view by a tall privet hedge. At the end of the hedge was a small gate, through which she passed into a field. Their house was near the top of the hill, and before the search for her had fairly begun she had reached the summit, gone down on the other side, and entered a little grove whose shade invited her.

When she left the house there had not been a breath of air stirring, but even as she entered the grove the ribbons of her hat fluttered in the wind that began to sough in the tops of the trees. The sun was still an hour high, but a darkness which was like a tangible pall shut out the light, and she could hardly see her way. She noticed nothing, but went blindly on.

Suddenly she stood still and put her hands over her eyes. Everything in the world seemed to have come to an end for a moment; then the deafening thunder rolled around her and above her. A shudder ran through the grove, the trees moaned, and the branches waved wildly in the air, as if striving to find some safe stronghold. Sara opened her eyes, but could not bear the blaze. Flash after flash burst upon her; there was no darkness between, only a beating of crimson upon red which made her stagger and sway from side to side, although she did not try to walk. The thunder roared tremendously. It filled the air to bursting, so that there seemed not to be room in all the universe for the crush of sound.

Presently the rain fell in torrents. Sara, drenched and almost paralyzed, strove to reach one of the larger trees. She thought there might be some protection in its strong trunk. Her dress caught on a projecting root, and she fell heavily forward.

(To be continued.)

JAPAN'S FAIR DAUGHTERS.

The maidens and matrons of the island empire, as they appear in the picturesque setting of their home life—Their dress, their amusements, their marriage customs.

NO living pictures shown in our entertainments, however beautiful and successful they may be, will ever equal the charm and loveliness of a Japanese maiden in her gorgeous attire of brightly colored silks. No picture, even from the brush of the most talented of our painters, has ever done justice to her natural grace, born elegance, and charm of manner. To fully appreciate her, however, one must be spared a sight of her in a New York store, or in a Midway Plaisance café—for there she is as much out of her element as a fish out of water, a picture in a hideous, out of proportion frame. One might as well expect to be pleased with a Watteau in an Empire frame, or to like a man wearing an evening dress at a picnic. There are some pictures so beautiful as to need no frame at all, but the Japanese beauty is not one of these. In her case the frame makes the value of the picture—nay, without the setting of her own fair Japan she is a pathetic, out of place little creature, only to be pitied. But to be really a picture, to appeal to us, to charm us as she does, the little *mousmé* needs her lovely, picturesque dresses, her big silk sashes, a dozen funny little ornaments in her black, glossy hair, her small wooden shoes doing “tic tac” on the hard, rough pavement; she needs the surroundings of her birth, the low, quaint houses, the wonderful temples with their idols of bronze and immense carved roofs, the tall pagodas, the beautiful gardens, studded with miniature lakes and rivers, with islands and mountains—gardens full of flowers, shaded by strangely shaped trees; she needs all these things as a background to her beauty, and as its life she must have the happy, ever laughing little beings of her own race—especially the Japanese children. Without all these, without the curious music which in Japan is heard everywhere, without the noise and excitement and life of the gay Japanese crowds, she is not happy, and when you have taken away a Japanese woman's happiness you have taken away her charm.

In no other country of the world will you see such happy people as in Japan. Nowhere do people know so well how to enjoy life. Even among the lowest of the laboring classes a satisfaction seems to reign, and it is with constant smiles that they toil and sweat. This everlasting happiness is natural to their race. It has its cause in the fact that their needs are small and that they know how to be satisfied with little; and for its effect one finds them to be the best disposed and best natured people in the world. Fighting, quarreling, swearing, are unknown to them, and I am sure that never in all Japan was such a thing heard of as a woman making “scenes,” or having an attack of nerves, or becoming hysterical because her dress would not fit, or slapping a child because the little one did not know what it had not been taught.

Cleanliness is one of the first factors in Japanese civilization. The poorest citizen bathes every day, even twice a day. There are over eight hundred public baths in the city of Tokio, and it is estimated that over three hundred thousand persons patronize them daily at a cost of one sen three rins per head—about half a cent. A reduction of three rins is made for children. In addition to this, every private house has its own bath room. In the villages where there are neither bathing establishments nor private bath rooms, the people take their tubs out of doors and bathe before their houses; for cleanliness is more esteemed there than our artificial western prudery. Indeed, it is not so long ago that Japanese ladies used to receive callers while in their bath—*en tout bien tout honneur*.

In a Japanese family the same bath does for all the members, and as man is considered the nobler sex the men bathe first, in the order of their age and dignity, the ladies afterwards, then the younger children; and all this without changing the water. Lastly the servants use the bath, unless they be sent to a public bath house.

The Japanese passion for bathing leads all classes to make extensive use of the