

THE STORY OF A PLAY

BY W. D. HOWELLS

IV

LOUISE kept wondering, the whole way back, how Maxwell had managed the recasting of the love-business, and she wished she had stayed with him, so that he could have appealed to her at any moment on the points that must have come up all the time. She ought to have coached him more fully about it, and told him the woman's side of such a situation, as he never could have imagined how many advances a woman can make with a man in such an affair, and the man never find it out. She had not made any advances herself when she wished to get him back, but she had wanted to make them; and she knew perfectly that he would not have noticed it if she had done the boldest sort of things to encourage him, to let him know that she liked him; he was so simple, in his straightforward egotism, beside her sinuous unselfishness.

She began to think how she was always contriving little sacrifices to his vanity, his modesty, and he was always accepting them with a serene ignorance of the fact that they were offered; and at this she strayed off on a little by-way in her reverie, and thought how it was his mind, always, that charmed her; it was no ignoble fondness she felt; no poor, grovelling pleasure in his good looks, though she had always seen that in a refined sort he had a great deal of manly beauty. But she had held her soul aloof from all that, and could truly say that what she adored in him was the beauty of his talent, which he seemed no more conscious of than of his dreamy eyes, the scornful sweetness of his mouth, the purity of his forehead, his sensitive nostrils, his pretty, ineffective little chin. She had studied her own looks with reference to his, and was glad to own them in nowise comparable, though she knew she was more graceful, and she could not help seeing that she was a little taller; she kept this fact from herself as much as possible. Her features were not regular, like his, but

she could perceive that they had charm in their irregularity; she could only wonder whether he thought that line going under her chin, and suggesting a future double chin in the little fold it made, was so very ugly. He seemed never to have thought of her looks, and if he cared for her, it was for some other reason, just as she cared for him. She did not know what the reason could be, but perhaps it was her sympathy, her appreciation, her cheerfulness; Louise believed that she had at least these small merits.

The thought of them brought her back to the play again, and to the love-business, and she wondered how she could have failed to tell him, when they were talking about what should bring the lovers together, after their prefatory quarrel, that simply willing it would do it. She knew that after she began to wish Maxwell back, she was in such a frenzy that she believed her volition brought him back; and now she really believed that you could hypnotize fate in some such way, and that your longings would fulfil themselves if they were intense enough. If he could not use that idea in this play, then he ought to use it in some other, something psychological, symbolistic, Maeterlinckish.

She was full of it when she dismounted from the barge at the hotel and hurried over to their cottage, and she was intolerably disappointed when she did not find him at work in the parlor.

"Brice! Brice!" she shouted, in the security of having the whole cottage to herself. She got no answer, and ran up to their room, overhead. He was not there, either, and now it seemed but too probable that he had profited by her absence to go out for a walk alone, after his writing, and fallen from the rocks, and been killed—he was so absent-minded. She offered a vow to Heaven that if he were restored to her she would never leave him again, even for a half-day, as long as either of them lived. In reward for this she saw him coming from the direction of the

beach, where nothing worse could have befallen him than a chill from the water, if the wind was off shore and he had been taking a bath.

She had not put off her hat yet, and she went out to meet him ; she could not kiss him at once, if she went to meet him, but she could wait till she got back to the cottage, and then kiss him. It would be a trial to wait, but it would be a trial to wait for him to come in, and he might stroll off somewhere else, unless she went to him. As they approached each other she studied his face for some sign of satisfaction with his morning's work. It lighted up at sight of her, but there remained an inner dark in it to her eye.

"What is the matter?" she asked, as she put her hand through his arm, and hung forward upon it so that she could look up into his face. "How did you get on with the love-business?"

"Oh, I think I've got that all right," he answered, with a certain reservation. "I've merely blocked it out, of course."

"So that you can show it to Godolphin?"

"I guess so."

"I see that you're not sure of it. We must go over it before he comes. He hasn't been here yet?"

"Not yet."

"Why are you so quiet, Brice? Is anything the matter? You look tired."

"I'm not particularly tired."

"Then you are worried. What is it?"

"Oh, you would have to know, sooner or later." He took a letter from his pocket and gave it to her. "It came just after I had finished my morning's work."

She pulled it out of the envelope and read :

"MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA, Friday.

"DEAR SIR : I beg leave to relinquish any claim that you may feel I have established to the play you have in hand. As it now stands, I do not see my part in it, and I can imagine why you should be reluctant to make further changes in it, in order to meet my requirements.

"If I can be of any service to you in placing the piece, I shall be glad to have you make use of me.

"Yours truly,

"LAUNCELOT GODOLPHIN."

"You blame *me*!" she said, after a blinding moment, in which the letter darkened before her eyes, and she tottered in her walk. She gave it back to him as she spoke.

"What a passion you have for blaming!" he answered, coldly. "If I fixed the blame on you it wouldn't help."

"No," Louise meekly assented, and they walked along toward their cottage. They hardly spoke again before they reached it and went in. Then she asked, "Did you expect anything like this from the way he parted with you yesterday?"

Maxwell gave a bitter laugh. "From the way we parted yesterday I was expecting him early this afternoon, with the world in the palm of his hand, to lay it at my feet. He all but fell upon my neck when he left me. I suppose his not actually doing it was an actor's intimation that we were to see each other no more."

"I wish you had nothing to do with them!" said Louise.

"They appear to have nothing to do with me," said Maxwell. "It comes to the same thing."

They reached the cottage, and sat down in the little parlor where she had left him so hopefully at work in the morning, where they had talked his play over so jubilantly the night before.

"What are you going to do?" she asked, after an abysmal interval.

"Nothing. What is there to do?"

"You have a right to an explanation ; you ought to demand it."

"I don't need any explanation. The case is perfectly clear. Godolphin doesn't want my play. That is all."

"Oh, Brice!" she lamented. "I am so dreadfully sorry, and I know it was my fault. Why don't you let me write to him, and explain ——"

Maxwell shook his head. "He doesn't want any explanation. He doesn't want the play, even. We must make up our minds to that, and let him go. Now we can try it with your managers."

Louise felt the unkindness of his calling them her managers, but she was glad to have him unkind to her ; deep within her Unitarianism she had the Puritan joy in suffering for a sin ; her treatment of Godolphin's suggestion of a skirt-dance, while very righteous in itself, was a sin

against her husband's interest, and she would rather he were unkind to her than not. The sooner she was punished for it and done with it, the better; in her unscientific conception of life, the consequences of a sin ended with its punishment. If Maxwell had upbraided her with the bitterness she merited, it would have been to her as if it were all right again with Godolphin. His failure to do so left the injury unrepaired, and she would have to do something. "I suppose you don't care to let me see what you've written to-day?"

"No, not now," said Maxwell, in a tone that said, "I haven't the heart for it." They sat awhile without speaking, and then she ventured, "Brice, I have an idea, but I don't know what you will think of it. Why not take Godolphin's letter on the face of it, and say that you are very sorry he must give up the play, and that you will be greatly obliged to him if he can suggest some other actor? That would be frank, at least."

Maxwell broke into a laugh that had some joy in it. "Do you think so? It isn't my idea of frankness, exactly."

"No, of course not. You always say what you mean, and you don't change. That is what is so beautiful in you. You can't understand a nature that is one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow."

"Oh, I think I can," said Maxwell, with a satirical glance.

"Brice!" she softly murmured, and then she said, "Well, I don't care. He is just like a woman."

"You didn't like my saying so last night."

"That was a different thing. At any rate, it's I that say so now, and I want you to write that to him. It will bring him back-flying. Will you?"

"I'll think about it," said Maxwell; "I'm not sure that I want Godolphin back, or, not at once. It's a great relief to be rid of him, in a certain way, though a manager might be worse slavery. Still, I think I would like to try a manager. I have never shown this play to one, and I know the Odeon people in Boston, and, perhaps——"

"You are saying that to comfort me!"

"I wouldn't comfort you for worlds, my dear. I am saying this to distress you. But since I have worked that love-

business over, it seems to me much less a one-part play, and if I could get a manager to take a fancy to it I could have my own way with it much better; at least, he wouldn't want me to take all the good things out of the other characters' mouths and stuff them into Haxard's."

"Do you really think so?"

"I really thought so before I got Godolphin's letter. That made him seem the one and only man for me."

"Yes," Louise assented, with a sad intelligence.

Maxwell seemed to have got some strength from confronting his calamity. At any rate he said, almost cheerfully, "I'll read you what I wrote this morning," and she had to let him, though she felt that it was taking her at a moment when her wish to console him was so great that she would not be able to criticise him. But she found that he had done it so well, there was no need of criticism.

"You are wonderful, Brice!" she said, in a transport of adoration, which she indulged as simply his due. "You are miraculous. Well, this is the greatest triumph yet, even of *your* genius. How you have seized the whole idea! And so subtly, so delicately! And so completely disguised! The girl acts just as a girl *would* have acted. How could you know it?"

"Perhaps I've seen it," he suggested, demurely.

"No, no, you *didn't* see it! That is the amusing part of it. You were as blind as a bat all the time, and you never had the least suspicion; you've told me so."

"Well, then, I've seen it retrospectively."

"Perhaps that way. But I don't believe you've seen it at all. You've divined it; and that's where your genius is worth all the experience in the world. The girl is twice as good as the man, and you never experienced a girl's feelings or motives. You divined them. It's pure inspiration. It's the prophet in you!"

"You'll be stoning me next," said Maxwell. "I don't think the man is so very bad, even if I didn't divine him."

"Yes, for a poor creature of experience and knowledge, he will do very well. But he doesn't compare with the girl."

"I hadn't so good a model."

She hugged him for saying that. "You pay the prettiest compliments in the world, even if you don't pick up handkerchiefs."

Their joy in the triumph of his art was unalloyed by the hope of anything outside of it, of any sort of honor or profit from it, though they could not keep the thought of these out very long.

"Yes," she said, after one of the delicious silences that divided their moments of exultation. "There won't be any trouble about getting your play taken, *now*."

After supper they strolled down for the sunset and twilight on the rocks. There, as the dusk deepened, she put her wrap over his shoulders as well as her own, and pulled it together in front of them both. "I am not going to have you taking cold, now, when you need all your health for your work more than ever. That love-business seems to me perfect just as it is, but I know you won't be satisfied till you have put the very last touch on it."

"Yes, I see all sorts of things I can do to it. Louise!"

"Well, what?"

"Don't you see that the love-business is the play now? I have got to throw away all the sin-interest, all the Haxard situation, or keep them as they are, and write a new play altogether, with the light, semi-comic motive of the love-business for the motive of the whole. It's out of tone with Haxard's tragedy, and it can't be brought into keeping with it. The sin-interest will kill the love-business, or the love-business will kill the sin-interest. Don't you see?"

"Why, of course! You must make this light affair now, and when it's opened the way for you with the public, you can bring out the old play," she assented, and it instantly became the old play in both their minds; it became almost the superannuated play. They talked it over in this new aspect, and then they went back to the cottage, to look at the new play as it shadowed itself forth in the sketch Maxwell had made. He read the sketch to her again, and they saw how it could be easily expanded to three or four acts, and made to fill the stage and the evening.

"And it will be the most original thing that ever was!" she exulted.

"I don't think there's been anything exactly like it before," he allowed.

From time to time they spoke to each other in the night, and asked if he were asleep, or she were asleep, and then began to talk of the play again. Toward morning they drowsed a little, but at their time of life the loss of a night's sleep means nothing, and they rose as glad as they had lain down.

"I'll tell you, Brice," she said, the first thing, "you must have it that they have been engaged, and you can call the play, 'The Second Chapter,' or something more alliterative. Don't you think that would be a good name?"

"It would make the fortune of any play," he answered, "let alone a play of such merit as this."

"Well, then, sha'n't you always say that I did something toward it?"

"I shall say you did everything toward it. You originated the idea, and named it, and I simply acted as your amanuensis, as it were, and wrote it out mostly from your dictation. It shall go on the bills, 'The Second Chapter,' a demi-semi-serious comedy by Mrs. Louise Hilary Maxwell—in letters half a foot high—and by B. Maxwell—in very small lower case, that can't be read without the aid of a microscope."

"Oh, Brice! If you make him talk that way to her, it will be perfectly killing."

"I dare say the audience will find it so."

They were so late at breakfast, and sat there so long talking, for Maxwell said he did not feel like going to work quite so promptly as usual, that it was quite ten o'clock when they came out of the dining-room, and then they stayed awhile gossiping with people on the piazza of the hotel before they went back to their cottage. When they came round the corner in sight of it they saw the figure of a man pacing back and forth on the veranda, with his head dropped forward, and swinging a stick thoughtfully behind him. Louise pulled Maxwell convulsively to a halt, for the man was Godolphin.

"What do you suppose it means?" she gasped.

"I dare say he will tell us," said Maxwell, dryly. "Don't stop and stare at him. He has got eyes all over him, and he's clothed with self-consciousness as with a garment, and I don't choose to let him think that his being there is the least important or surprising."

"No, of course not. That would be ridiculous," and she would have liked to pause for a moment's worship of her husband's sense, which appeared to her almost as great as his genius. But it seemed to her an inordinately long time before they reached the cottage-gate, and Godolphin came half way down the walk to meet them.

He bowed seriously to her, and then said, with dignity, to her husband, "Mr. Maxwell, I feel that I owe you an apology—or an explanation, rather—for the abrupt note I sent you yesterday. I wish to assure you that I had no feeling in the matter, and that I am quite sincere in my offer of my services."

"Why, you're very good, Mr. Godolphin," said Maxwell. "I knew that I could fully rely upon your kind offer. Won't you come in?" He offered the actor his hand, and they moved together toward the cottage; Louise had at once gone before, but not so far as to be out of hearing.

"Why, thank you, I *will* sit down a moment. I found the walk over rather fatiguing. It's going to be a hot day." He passed his handkerchief across his forehead, and insisted upon placing a chair for Mrs. Maxwell before he could be made to sit down, though she said that she was going indoors, and would not sit. "You understand, of course, Mr. Maxwell, that I should still like to have your play, if it could be made what I want."

Maxwell would not meet his wife's eye in answering. "Oh, yes, the only question with me is, whether I can make it what you want. That has been the trouble all along. I know that the love-business in the play, as it stood, was inadequate. But yesterday, just before I got your note, I had been working it over in a perfectly new shape. I wish, if you have a quarter of an hour to throw away, you'd let me show you what I've written. Perhaps you can advise me."

"Why, I shall be delighted to be of any sort of use, Mr. Maxwell," said Godolphin, with softened state; and he threw himself back in his chair with an air of eager readiness.

"I will get your manuscript, Brice," said Louise, at a motion her husband made to rise. She ran in and brought it out,

and then went away again. She wished to remain somewhere within ear-shot, but, upon the whole, she decided against it, and went upstairs, where she kept herself from eavesdropping by talking with the chambermaid, who had come over from the hotel.

V

LOUISE did not come down till she heard Godolphin walking away on the plank. She said to herself that she had shipwrecked her husband once, by putting in her oar, and she was not going to do it again. When the actor's footfalls died out in the distance she descended to the parlor, where she found Maxwell over his manuscript at the table.

She had to call to him, "Well?" before he seemed aware of her presence.

Even then he did not look round, but he said, "Godolphin wants to play Atland."

"The lover?"

"Yes. He thinks he sees his part in it."

"And do you?"

"How do I know?"

"Well, I am glad I let him get safely away before I came back, for I certainly couldn't have held in when he proposed that, if I had been here. I don't understand you, Brice! Why do you have anything more to do with him? Why do you let him touch the new play? Was he ever of the least use with the old one?"

Maxwell lay back in his chair with a laugh. "Not the least in the world." The realization of the fact amused him more and more. "I was just thinking how everything he ever got me to do to it," he looked down at the manuscript, "was false and wrong. They talk about a knowledge of the stage as if the stage were a difficult science, instead of a very simple piece of mechanism whose limitations and possibilities anyone can seize at a glance. All that their knowledge of it comes to is clap-trap, pure and simple. They brag of its resources, and tell you the carpenter can do anything you want nowadays, but if you attempt anything outside of their tradition they are frightened. They think that their exits and their entrances are great matters, and that they must come on with such a speech,

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and go off with such another ; but it is not of the least consequence how they come or go if they have something interesting to say or do."

"Why don't you say these things to Godolphin?"

"I do, and worse. He admits their truth with a candor and an intelligence that are dismaying. He has a perfect conception of Atland's part, and he probably will play it in a way to set your teeth on edge."

"Why do you let him? Why don't you keep your play and offer it to a manager or some actor who will know how to do it?" demanded Louise, with sorrowful submission.

"Godolphin will know how to do it, even if he isn't able to. And, besides, I should be a fool to fling him away for any sort of promising uncertainty."

"He was willing to fling you away!"

"Yes, but I'm not so important to him as he is to me. He's the best I can do for the present. It's a compromise all the way through ; a cursed spite from beginning to end. Your own words don't represent your ideas, and the more conscience you put into the work the farther you get it from what you thought it would be. Then comes the actor with the infernal chemistry of his personality. He imagines the thing perfectly, not as you imagined it, but as you wrote it, and then he is no more able to play it as he imagined it than you were to write it as you imagined it. What the public finally gets is something three times removed from the truth that was first in the dramatist's mind. But I'm very lucky to have Godolphin back again."

"I hope you're not going to let him see that you think so."

"Oh, no ! I'm going to keep him in a suppliant attitude throughout, and I'm going to let you come in and tame his spirit, if he—kicks."

"Don't be vulgar, Brice," said Louise, and she laughed rather forlornly. "I don't see how you have the heart to joke, if you think it's all so bad as you say."

"I haven't. I'm joking without any heart." He stood up. "Let us go and take a bath."

She glanced at him with a swift inventory of his fagged looks, and said, "In-

deed, you shall not take a bath this morning. You couldn't react against it. You won't, will you?"

"No, I'll only lie on the sand, if you can pick me out a good warm spot, and watch you."

"I shall not bathe, either."

"Well, then, I'll watch the other women." He put out his hand and took hers.

She felt his touch very cold. "You are excited I can see. I wish——"

"What? That I was not an intending dramatist?"

"That you didn't have such excitements in your life. They will kill you."

"They are all that will keep me alive."

They went down to the beach, and walked back and forth on its curve several times before they dropped in the sand at a discreet distance from several groups of hotel acquaintance. People were coming and going from the line of bath-houses that backed upon the low sand-bank behind them, with its tufts of coarse silvery green grasses. The Maxwells bowed to some of the ladies who tripped gayly past them in their airy costumes to the surf, or came up from it sobered and shivering. Four or five young fellows, with sun-blackened arms and legs, were passing ball near them. A pony-carriage drove by on the wet sand ; a horseman on a crop-tailed roan thumped after it at a hard trot. Dogs ran barking vaguely about, and children with wooden shovels screamed at their play. Far off shimmered the sea, of one pale blue with the sky. The rocks were black at either end of the beach ; a line of sail-boats and dories swung across its crescent beyond the bathers, who bobbed up and down in the surf, or showed a head here and there outside of it.

"What a singular spectacle," said Maxwell. "The casting off of the conventional in sea-bathing always seems to me like the effect in those dreams where we appear in society insufficiently dressed, and wonder whether we can make it go."

"Yes, isn't it?" His wife tried to cover all the propositions with one loosely fitting assent.

"I'm surprised," Maxwell went on, "that some realistic wretch hasn't put this sort of thing on the stage. It would be tremendously effective ; if he made it realistic enough it would be attacked by the press

as improper and would fill the house. Couldn't we work a sea-bathing scene into the 'Second Chapter?' It would make the fortune of the play, and it would give Godolphin a chance to show his noble frame in something like the majesty of nature. Godolphin would like nothing better. We could have Atland rescue Salome, and Godolphin could flop round among the canvas breakers for ten minutes, and come on for a recall with the heroine, both dripping real water all over the stage."

"Don't be disgusting, Brice," said his wife, absently. She had her head half turned from him, watching a lady who had just come out of her bath-house and was passing very near them on her way to the water. Maxwell felt the inattention in his wife's tone and looked up.

The bather returned their joint gaze steadily from eyes that seemed, as Maxwell said, to smoulder under their long lashes, and to question her effect upon them in a way that he was some time finding a phrase for. He was tormented to make out whether she were a large person or not; without her draperies he could not tell. But she moved with splendid freedom, and her beauty expressed a maturity of experience beyond her years; she looked very young, and yet she looked as if she had been taking care of herself a good while. She was certainly very handsome, Louise owned to herself, as the lady quickened her pace, and finally ran down to the water and plunged into a breaker that rolled in at the right moment in uncommon volume.

"Well?" she asked her husband, whose eyes had gone with hers.

"We ought to have clapped."

"Do you think she is an actress?"

"I don't know. I never saw her before. She seemed to turn the sunshine into limelight as she passed. Why! that's rather pretty, isn't it? And it's a verse. I wonder what it is about these people. The best of them have nothing of the stage in them; at least the men haven't. I'm not sure, though, that the best women haven't. There are lots of women off the stage who are actresses, but they don't seem so. They're personal; this one was impersonal. She didn't seem to regard me as a man; she regarded me as a house. Did you feel that?"

"Yes, that was it, I suppose. But she regarded you more than she did me, I think."

"Why, of course. You were only a *matinée*."

They sat half an hour longer in the sand, and then he complained that the wind blew all the warmth out of him as fast as the sun shone it into him. She felt his hand next her and found it still cold; after a glance round she furtively felt his forehead.

"You're still thinking," she sighed. "Come! We must go back."

"Yes. That girl won't be out of the water for half an hour yet; and we couldn't wait to see her clothed, and in her right mind afterward."

"What makes you think she's a girl?" asked his wife, as they moved slowly off.

He did not seem to have heard her question. He said, "I don't believe I can make the new play go, Louise, I haven't the strength for it. There's too much good stuff in Haxard; I can't throw away what I've done on it."

"That is just what I was thinking, Brice! It would be too bad to lose that. The love-business as you've remodelled it is all very well. But it *is* light, it's comedy; and Haxard is such splendid tragedy. I want you to make your first impression in that. You can do comedy afterward; but if you did comedy first, the public would never think your tragedy was serious."

"Yes, there's a law in that. A clown mustn't prophesy. If a prophet chooses to joke, now and then, all well and good. I couldn't begin now and expand that love-business into a whole play. It must remain an episode, and Godolphin must take it or leave it. Of course he'll want Atland emaciated to fatten Haxard, as he calls it. But Atland doesn't amount to much, as it is, and I don't believe I could make him; it's essentially a passive part; Salome must make the chief effect in that business, and I think I'll have her a little more serious, too. It'll be more in keeping with the rest."

"I don't see why she shouldn't be serious. There's nothing ignoble in what she does."

"No. It can be very impassioned."

Louise thought of the smouldering eyes of that woman, and she wondered if they

were what suggested something very impassioned to Maxwell ; but with all the frankness between them, she did not ask him.

On their way to the cottage they saw one of the hotel bell-boys coming out. "Just left a telegram in there for you," he called, as he came toward them.

Louise began, "Oh, dear, I hope nothing's the matter with papa ! Or your mother."

She ran forward, and Maxwell followed at his usual pace, so that she had time to go inside and come out with the despatch before he mounted the veranda steps.

"You open it !" she entreated, piteously, holding it toward him.

He pulled it impatiently open, and glanced at the signature. "It's from Godolphin," and he read, "Don't destroy old play. Keep new love-business for episode. Will come over this afternoon." Maxwell smiled. "More mind transference."

Louise laughed in hysterical relief. "Now you can make him do just what you want."

VI

MAXWELL now, at least, knew that he had got his play going in the right direction again. He felt a fresh pleasure in returning to the old lines after his excursion in the region of comedy, and he worked upon them with fresh energy. He rehabilitated the love-business as he and his wife had newly imagined it, and to disguise the originals the more effectively, he made the girl, whom he had provisionally called Salome, more like himself than Louise in certain superficial qualities, though in an essential nobleness and singleness, which consisted with a great deal of feminine sinuosity and subtlety, she remained a portrait of Louise. He was doubtful whether the mingling of characteristics would not end in unreality, but she was sure it would not ; she said he was so much like a woman in the traits he had borrowed from himself that Salome would be all the truer for being like him ; or, at any rate, she would be finer, and more ideal. She said that it was nonsense, the way people regarded women as altogether different from men ; she believed they were very much alike ; a girl was as

much the daughter of her father as of her mother ; she alleged herself as proof of the fact that a girl was often a great deal more her father's daughter, and she argued that if Maxwell made Salome quite in his own spiritual image, no one would dream of criticising her as unwomanly. Then he asked if he need only make Atland in her spiritual image to have him the manliest sort of fellow. She said that was not what she meant, and, in any case, a man could have feminine traits, and be all the nicer for them, but, if a woman had masculine traits, she would be disgusting. At the same time, if you drew a man from a woman, he would be ridiculous.

"Then you want me to model Atland on myself, too," said Maxwell.

She thought a moment. "Yes, I do. If Salome is to be taken mostly from me, I couldn't bear to have him like anybody but you. It would be indelicate."

"Well, now, I'll tell you what, I'm not going to stand it," said Maxwell. "I am going to make Atland like Pinney."

But she would not be turned from the serious aspect of the affair by his joking. She asked, "Do you think it would intensify the situation if he was not equal to her? If the spectator could be made to see that she was throwing herself away on him, after all?"

"Wouldn't that leave the spectator a little too inconsolable? You don't want the love-business to double the tragedy, you want to have it relieve it, don't you?"

"Yes, that is true. You must make him worth all the sacrifice. I couldn't stand it if he wasn't."

Maxwell frowned, as he always did when he became earnest, and said, with a little sigh, "He must be passive, negative, as I said ; you must simply feel that he is *good*, and that she will be safe with him, after the worst has happened to her father. And I must keep the interest of the love-business light, without letting it become farcical. I must get charm, all I can, into her character. You won't mind my getting the charm all from you?"

"Oh, Brice, what sweet things you say to me ! I wish everybody could know how divine you are."

"The women would all be making love to me, and I should hate that. One is quite enough."

"Am I quite enough?" she entreated.

"You have been, up to the present time."

"And do you think I shall always be?"

She slid from her chair to her knees on the floor beside him, where he sat at his desk, and put her arms round him.

He did not seem to know it. "Look here, Louise, I have got to connect this love-business with the main action of the play, somehow. It won't do simply to have it an episode. How would it do to have Atland know all the time that Haxard has killed Greenshaw, and be keeping it from Salome, while she is betraying her love for him?"

"Wouldn't that be rather tawdry?"

Louise let her arms slip down to her side, and looked up at him, as she knelt.

"Yes, it would," he owned.

He looked very unhappy about it, and she rose to her feet, as if to give it more serious attention. "Brice, I want your play to be thoroughly honest and true from beginning to end, and not to have any sort of catchpenny effectivism in it. You have planned it so nobly, that I can't bear to have you lower the standard the least bit; and I think the honest and true way is to let the love-business be a pleasant fact in the case, as it might very well be. Those things *do* keep going on in life alongside of the greatest misery, the greatest unhappiness."

"Well," said Maxwell, "I guess you are right about the love-business. I'll treat it frankly for what it is, a fact in the case. That will be the right way, and that will be the strong way. It will be like life. I don't know that you are bound to relate things strictly to each other in art, any more than they are related in life. There are all sorts of incidents and interests playing round every great event that seem to have no more relation to it than the rings of Saturn have to Saturn. They form the atmosphere of it. If I can let Haxard's wretchedness be seen at last through the atmosphere of his daughter's happiness!"

"Yes," she said, "that will be quite enough." She knew that they had talked up to the moment when he could best begin to work, and now left him to himself.

Within a week he got the rehabilitated love-business in place, and the play ready

to show to Godolphin again. He had managed to hold the actor off in the meantime, but now he returned in full force, with suggestions and misgivings which had first to be cleared away before he could give a clear mind to what Maxwell had done. Then Maxwell could see that he was somehow disappointed, for he began to talk as if there were no understanding between them for his taking the play. He praised it warmly, but he said that it would be hard to find a woman to do the part of Salome.

"That is the principal part in the piece now, you know," he added.

"I don't see how," Maxwell protested.

"It seems to me that her character throws Haxard's into greater relief than before, and gives it more prominence."

"You've made the love-business too strong, I think. I supposed you would have something light and graceful to occupy the house in the suspense between the points in Haxard's case. If I were to do him, I should be afraid that people would come back from Salome to him with more or less of an effort. I don't say they would, but that's the way it strikes me now; perhaps someone else would look at it quite differently."

"Then, as it is, you don't want it?"

"I don't say that. But it seems to me that Salome is the principal figure now. I think that's a mistake."

"If it's a fact, it's a mistake. I don't want to have it so," said Maxwell, and he made such effort as he could to swallow his disgust.

Godolphin asked, after awhile, "In that last scene between her and her father, and in fact all the scenes between them, couldn't you give more of the strong speeches to him? She's a great creation now, but isn't she too great for Atland?"

"I've kept Atland under, purposely, because the part is necessarily a negative one, and because I didn't want him to compete with Haxard at all."

"Yes, that is all right; but as it is, *she* competes with Haxard."

After Godolphin had gone, Louise came down, and found Maxwell in a dreary muse over his manuscript. He looked up at her with a lack-lustre eye, and said, "Godolphin is jealous of Salome now. What he really wants is a five-act mono-

logue that will keep him on the stage all the time. He thinks that as it is, she will take all the attention from him."

Louise appeared to reflect. "Well, isn't there something in that?"

"Good heavens! I should think you were going to play Haxard, too!"

"No; but of course you can't have two characters of equal importance in your play. Someone has to be first, and Godolphin doesn't want an actress taking all the honors away from him."

"Then why did you pretend to like the way I had done it," Maxwell demanded, angrily, "if you think she will take the honors from him?"

"I didn't say that I did. All that I want is that you should ask yourself whether she would or not."

"Are *you* jealous of her?"

"Now, my dear, if you are going to be unreasonable, I will not talk with you."

Nothing maddened Maxwell so much as to have his wife take this tone with him, when he had followed her up through the sinuosities that always began with her after a certain point. Short of that she was as frank and candid as a man, and he understood her, but beyond that the eternal womanly began, and he could make nothing of her. She evaded, and came and went, and returned upon her course, and all with as good a conscience, apparently, as if she were meeting him fairly and squarely on the question they started with. Sometimes he doubted if she really knew that she was behaving insincerely, or whether, if she knew it, she could help doing it. He believed her to be a more truthful nature than himself, and it was insufferable for her to be less so, and then accuse him of illogicality.

"I have no wish to talk," he said, smothering his rage, and taking up a page of manuscript.

"Of course," she went on, as if there had been no break in their good feeling, "I know what a goose Godolphin is, and I don't wonder you're vexed with him, but you know very well that I have nothing but the good of the play in view as a work of art, and I should say that if you couldn't keep Salome from rivalling Haxard in the interest of the spectator, you had better go back to the idea of making two plays of it. I think that the 'Second

Chapter' would be a very good thing to begin with."

"Why, good heavens! You said just the contrary when we decided to drop it."

"Yes, but that was when I thought you would be able to subdue Salome."

"There never was any question of subduing Salome; it was a question of subduing Atland!"

"It's the same thing; keeping the love-business in the background."

"I give it up!" Maxwell flung down his manuscript in sign of doing so. "The whole thing is a mess, and you seem to delight in tormenting me about it. How am I to give the love-business charm, and yet keep it in the background?"

"I should think you could."

"How?"

"Well, I was afraid you would give Salome too much prominence."

"Didn't you know whether I had done so or not? You knew exactly what I had done before Godolphin came!"

"If Godolphin thinks she is too prominent, you ought to trust his instinct."

Maxwell would not answer her. He went out, and she saw him strolling down the path to the rocks. She took the manuscript and began to read it over.

He did not come back, and when she was ready to go to supper, she had to go down to the rocks for him. His angry fit seemed to have passed, but he looked abjectly sad, and her heart ached at sight of him. She said, cheerfully, "I have been reading that love-business over again, Brice, and I don't find it so far out as I was afraid it was. Salome is a little too *proncée*, but you can easily mend that. She is a delightful character, and you have given her charm—too much charm. I don't believe there's a truer woman in the whole range of the drama. She is perfect, and that is why I think you can afford to keep her back a little in the passages with Haxard. Of course Godolphin wants to shine there. You needn't give him her speeches, but you can put them somewhere else, in some of the scenes with Atland; it won't make any difference how much she outshines *him*, poor fellow."

He would not be entreated at once, but after letting her talk on to much the same effect for awhile, he said, "I will see what

can be done with it. At present I am sick of the whole thing."

"Yes, just drop it for the present," she said. "I'm hungry, aren't you?"

"I didn't know it was time."

She was very tender with him, walking up to the hotel, and all that evening she kept him amused, so that he would not want to look at his manuscript. She used him, as a wife is apt to use her husband when he is fretted and not very well, as if he were her little boy, and she did this so sweetly that Maxwell could not resent it.

The next morning she let him go to his play again, and work all the morning. He ended about noon, and told her he had done what she wanted done to the love-business, he thought, but he would not show it to her, for he said he was tired of it, and would have to go over it with Godolphin, at any rate, when he came in the afternoon. They went to the beach, but the person with the smouldering eyes failed to appear, and in fact they did not see her again at Magnolia, and they decided that she must have been passing a few days at one of the other hotels, and gone away.

Godolphin arrived in the sunniest good-humor, as if he had never had any thought of relinquishing the play, and he professed himself delighted with the changes Maxwell had made in the love-business. He said the character of Salome had the true proportion to all the rest now; and Maxwell understood that he would not be jealous of the actress who played the part, or feel her a dangerous rival in the public favor. He approved of the transposition of the speeches that Maxwell had made, or at least he no longer openly coveted them for Haxard.

What was more important to Maxwell was that Louise seemed finally contented with the part, too, and said that now, no matter what Godolphin wanted, she would never let it be touched again. "I am glad you have got that 'impassioned' rubbish out. I never thought that was in character with Salome."

The artistic consciousness of Maxwell, which caught all the fine reluctances and all the delicate feminine preferences of his wife, was like a subtle web woven around him, and took everything, without his willing it, from within him as well as from without, and held it inexorably for future use.

He knew the source of the impassioned rubbish which had displeased his wife; and he had felt while he was employing it that he was working in a commoner material than the rest of Salome's character; but he had experimented with it in the hope that she might not notice it. The fact that she had instantly noticed it, and had generalized the dislike which she only betrayed at last, after she had punished him sufficiently, remained in the meshes of the net he wore about his mind, as something of value, which he could employ to exquisite effect if he could once find a scheme fit for it.

In the meantime it would be hard to say whether Godolphin continued more a sorrow or a joy to Maxwell, who was by no means always of the same mind about him. He told his wife sometimes, when she was pitying him, that it was a good discipline for him to work with such a man, for it taught him a great deal about himself, if it did not teach him much else. He said that it tamed his overweening pride to find that there was artistic ability employing itself with literature which was so absolutely unlike literary ability. Godolphin conceived perfectly of the literary intention in the fine passages of the play, and enjoyed their beauty, but he did not value them any more than the poorest and crudest verbiage that promised him a point. In fact, Maxwell found that in two or three places the actor was making a wholly wrong version of his words, and maturing in his mind an effect from his error that he was rather loath to give up, though when he was instructed as to their true meaning, he saw how he could get a better effect out of it. He had an excellent intelligence, but this was employed so entirely in the study of impression that significance was often a secondary matter with him. He had not much humor, and Maxwell doubted if he felt it much in others, but he told a funny story admirably, and did character-stuff, as he called it, with the subtlest sense; he had begun in sketches of the variety type. Sometimes Maxwell thought him very well versed in the history and theory of the drama; but there were other times when his ignorance seemed almost creative in that direction. He had apparently no feeling for values; he would want a good effect used, without regard to the havoc it made of the whole picture, though doubtless if it

could have been realized to him, he would have abhorred it as thoroughly as Maxwell himself. He would come over from Manchester one day with a notion for the play so bad that it almost made Maxwell shed tears; and the next with something so good that Maxwell marvelled at it; but Godolphin seemed to value the one no more than the other. He was a creature of moods the most extreme; his faith in Maxwell was as profound as his abysmal distrust of him; and his frank and open nature was full of suspicion. He was like a child in the simplicity of his selfishness, as far as his art was concerned, and in all matters aside from it he was chaotically generous. His formlessness was sometimes almost distracting; he presented himself to the author's imagination as mere human material, waiting to be moulded in this shape or that. From day to day, from week to week, Maxwell lived in a superficial uncertainty whether Godolphin had really taken his play, or would ever produce it; yet at the bottom of his heart he confided in the promises which the actor lavished upon him both in the written and the spoken word. They had an agreement carefully drawn up as to all the business between them, but he knew that Godolphin would not be held by any clause of it that he wished to break; he did not believe that Godolphin understood what it bound him to, either when he signed it or afterward; but he was sure that he would do not only what was right, but what was noble, if he could be taken at the right moment. Upon the whole, he liked him; in a curious sort, he respected and honored him; and he defended him against Mrs. Maxwell when she said that Godolphin was wearing her husband's life out, and that if he made the play as greatly successful as "Hamlet," or the "Trip to Chinatown," he would not be worth what it cost them both in time and temper.

They lost a good deal of time and temper with the play, which was almost a conjugal affair with them, and the struggle to keep up a show of gay leisure before the summering world up and down the coast told upon Mrs. Maxwell's nerves. She did not mind the people in the hotel so much; they were very nice, but she did not know many of them, and she could not care for them as she did for her friends

who came up from Beverly Farms and over from Manchester. She hated to call Maxwell from his work at such times, not only because she pitied him; but because he came to help receive her friends with such an air of gloomy absence and open reluctance; and she had hated still worse to say he was busy with his play, the play he was writing for Mr. Godolphin. Her friends were apparently unable to imagine anyone writing a play so seriously, and they were unable to imagine Mr. Godolphin at all, for they had never heard of him; the splendor of his unknown name took them more than anything else. As for getting Maxwell to return their visits with her, when men had come with the ladies who called upon her, she could only manage it if he was so fagged with working at his play that he was too weak to resist her will, and even then he had to be torn from it almost by main force. He behaved so badly in the discharge of some of these duties to society, and was, to her eye at least, so bored and worried by them, that she found it hard to forgive him, and made him suffer for it on the way home till she relented at the sight of his thin face, the face that she loved, that she had thought the world well lost for. After the third or fourth time she made him go with her she gave it up and went alone, though she was aware that it might look as if they were not on good terms. She only obliged him after that to go with her to her father's, where she would not allow any shadow of suspicion to fall upon their happiness, and where his absent-mindedness would be accounted for. Her mother seemed to understand it better than her father, who, she could see, sometimes inwardly resented it as neglect. She also exacted of Maxwell that he should not sit silent through a whole meal at the hotel, and that, if he did not or could not talk, he should keep looking at her, and smiling and nodding, now and then. If he would remember to do this she would do all the talking herself. Sometimes he did not remember, and then she trod on his foot in vain.

The droll side of the case often presented itself for her relief, and, after all, she knew beforehand that this was the manner of man she was marrying, and

she was glad to marry him. She was happier than she had ever dreamed of being. She was one of those women who live so largely in their sympathies that if these were employed she had no thought of herself, and not to have any thought of one's self is to be blessed. Maxwell had no thought of anything but his work, and that made his bliss ; if she could have no thought but of him in his work, she could feel herself in Heaven with him.

VII

JULY and August went by, and it was time for Godolphin to take the road again. By this time Maxwell's play was in as perfect form as it could be until it was tried upon the stage and then overhauled for repairs. Godolphin had decided to try it first in Toronto, where he was going to open, and then to give it in the West as often as he could. If it did as well as he expected he would bring it on for a run in New York about the middle of December. He would want Maxwell at the rehearsals there, but for the present he said he preferred to stage-manage it himself ; they had talked it up so fully that he had all the author's intentions in mind.

He came over from Manchester the day before his vacation ended to take leave of the Maxwells. He was in great spirits with the play, but he confessed to a misgiving in regard to the lady whom he had secured for the part of Salome. He said there was only one woman he ever saw fit to do that part, but when he named the actress the Maxwells had to say they had never heard of her before. "She is a Southerner. She is very well known in the West," Godolphin said.

Louise asked if she had ever played in Boston, and when he said she had not, Louise said "Oh !"

Maxwell trembled, but Godolphin seemed to find nothing latent in his wife's offensive tone, and after a little further talk they all parted on the friendliest terms. The Maxwells did not hear from him for a fortnight, though he was to have tried the play in Toronto at least a week earlier. Then there came a telegram from Midland :

"Tried play here last night. Went like wildfire. Will write. GODOLPHIN."

The message meant success, and the Maxwells walked the air. The production of the piece was mentioned in the Associated Press despatches to the Boston papers, and though Mrs. Maxwell studied these in vain for some verbal corroboration of Godolphin's jubilant message, she did not lose faith in it, nor allow her husband to do so. In fact, while they waited for Godolphin's promised letter, they made use of their leisure to count the chickens which had begun to hatch. The actor had agreed to pay the author at the rate of \$5 an act for each performance of the play, and as it was five acts long a simple feat of arithmetic showed that the nightly gain from it would be \$25, and that if it ran every night and two afternoons, for matinées, the weekly return from it would be \$200. Besides this, Godolphin had once said, in a moment of high content with the piece, that if it went as he expected it to go he would pay Maxwell over and above this \$25 a performance five per cent. of the net receipts whenever these passed \$1,000. His promise had not been put in writing, and Maxwell had said at the time that he should be satisfied with his \$5 an act, but he had told his wife of it, and they had both agreed that Godolphin would keep it. They now took it into the account in summing up their gains, and Mrs. Maxwell thought it reasonable to figure at least \$25 more from it for each time the play was given ; but as this brought the weekly sum up to \$400, she so far yielded to her husband as to scale the total at \$300, though she said it was absurd to put it at any such figure. She refused, at any rate, to estimate their earnings from the season at less than \$15,000. It was useless for Maxwell to urge that Godolphin had other pieces in his repertory, things that had made his reputation, and that he would naturally want to give sometimes. She asked him whether Godolphin himself had not voluntarily said that if the piece went as he expected he would play nothing else as long as he lived, like Jefferson with Rip Van Winkle ; and here, she said, it had already, by his own showing, gone at once like wildfire. When Maxwell

pleaded that they did not know what wildfire meant she declared that it meant an overwhelming house and unbridled rapture in the audience ; it meant an instant and lasting triumph for the play. She began to praise Godolphin, or, at least, to own herself mistaken in some of her decrivals of him. She could not be kept from bubbling over to two or three ladies at the hotel, where it was quickly known what an immense success the first performance of Maxwell's play had been. He was put to shame by several asking him when they were to have it in Boston, but his wife had no embarrassment in answering that it would probably be kept the whole winter in New York, and not come to Boston till some time in the early spring.

She was resolved, now, that he should drive over to Beverly Farms with her, and tell her father and mother about the success of the play. She had instantly telegraphed them on getting Godolphin's despatch, and she began to call out to her father as soon as she got inside the house, and saw him coming down the stairs in the hall. "Now, what do you say, papa? Isn't it glorious? Didn't I tell you it would be the greatest success? Did you ever hear anything like it? Where's mamma? If she shouldn't be at home, I don't know what I shall do!"

"She's here," said her father, arriving at the foot of the stairs, where Louise embraced him, and then let him shake hands with her husband. "She's dressing. We were just going over to see you."

"Well, you've been pretty deliberate about it! Here it's after lunch, and I telegraphed you at ten o'clock." She went on to bully her father more and more, and to flourish Maxwell's triumph in his face. "We're going to have three hundred dollars a week from it at the very least, and fifteen thousand dollars for the season. What do you think of that? Isn't that pretty good, for two people that had nothing in the world yesterday? What do you say now, papa?"

There were all sorts of lurking taunts, demands, reproaches, in these words, which both the men felt, but they smiled across her, and made as if they were superior to her simple exultation.

"I should say you had written the play yourself, Louise," said her father.

"No," answered her husband, "Godolphin wrote the play ; or I've no doubt he's telling the reporters so by this time."

Louise would not mind them. "Well, I don't care! I want papa to acknowledge that I was right, for once. Anybody could believe in Brice's genius, but I believed in his star, and I always knew that he would get on, and I was all for his giving up his newspaper work, and devoting himself to the drama ; and now the way is open to him, and all he has got to do is to keep on writing."

"Come now, Louise," said her husband.

"Well," her father interposed, "I'm glad of your luck, Maxwell. It isn't in my line, exactly, but I don't believe I could be any happier, if it were. After all, it's doing something to elevate the stage. I wish someone would take hold of the pulpit."

Maxwell shrugged. "I'm not strong enough for that, quite. And I can't say that I had any conscious intention to elevate the stage with my play."

"But you had it unconsciously, Brice," said Louise, "and it can't help having a good effect on life, too."

"It will teach people to be careful how they murder people," Maxwell assented.

"Well, it's a great chance," said Hilary, with the will to steer a middle course between Maxwell's modesty and Louise's overweening pride. "There really isn't anything that people talk about more. They discuss plays as they used to discuss sermons. If you've done a good play, you've done a good thing."

His wife hastened to make answer for him. "He's done a *great* play, and there are no ifs or ans about it." She went on to celebrate Maxwell's achievement till he was quite out of countenance, for he knew that she was doing it mainly to rub his greatness into her father, and he had so much of the old grudge left that he would not suffer himself to care whether Hilary thought him great or not. It was a relief when Mrs. Hilary came in. Louise became less defiant in her joy then, or else the effect of it was lost in Mrs. Hilary's assumption of an entire expectedness in the event. Her world was indeed so remote from the world of art that she could value success in it only as it related itself

to her family, and it seemed altogether natural to her that her daughter's husband should take its honors. She was by no means a stupid woman; for a woman, born and married to wealth, with all the advantages that go with it, she was uncommonly intelligent; but she could not help looking upon æsthetic honors of any sort as in questionable taste. She would have preferred position in a son-in-law to any distinction appreciable to the general, but wanting that it was fit he should be distinguished in the way he chose. In her feeling it went far to redeem the drama that it should be related to the Hilarys by marriage, and if she had put her feeling into words, which always oversay the feelings, they would have been to the effect that the drama had behaved very well indeed, and deserved praise. This is what Mrs. Hilary's instinct would have said, but, of course, her reason would have said something quite different, and it was her reason that spoke to Maxwell, and expressed a pleasure in his success which was very gratifying to him. He got on with her better than with Hilary, partly because she was a woman and he was a man, and partly because, though she had opposed his marriage with Louise more steadily than her husband, there had been no open offence between them. He did not easily forgive a hurt to his pride, and Hilary, with all his good will since, and his quick repentance at the time, had never made it quite right with Maxwell for treating him rudely once, when he came to him so helplessly in the line of his newspaper work. They were always civil to each other, and they would always be what is called good friends; they had even an air of mutual understanding, as regarded Louise and her exuberances. Still, she was so like her father in these, and so unlike her mother, that it is probable the understanding between Hilary and Maxwell concerning her was only the understanding of men, and that Maxwell was really more in sympathy with Mrs. Hilary, even about Louise, even about the world. He might have liked it as much as she, if he had been as much of it, and he thought so well of it as a world that he meant to conquer one of the chief places in it. In the meantime he would have been very willing to revenge himself upon it, to satirize it, to hurt it, to

humble it—but for his own pleasure, not the world's good.

Hilary wanted the young people to stay the afternoon, and have dinner, but his wife perceived that they wished to be alone in their exultation, and she would not let him keep them beyond a decent moment, or share too much in their joy. With only that telegram from Godolphin they could not be definite about anything but their future, which Louise, at least, beheld all rose color. Just what size or shape their good fortune had already taken they did not know, and could not, till they got the letter Godolphin had promised, and she was in haste to go back to Magnolia for that, though it could not arrive before the next morning at the earliest. She urged that he might have written before telegraphing, or when he came from the theatre after the play was given. She was not satisfied with the reception of her news, and she said so to Maxwell, as soon as they started home.

"What did you want them to do?" he retorted, in a certain vexation. "They were as cordial about it as they could be."

"Cordial is not enough. You can't expect anything like uproar from mamma, but she took it too much as a matter of course, and I *did* suppose papa would be a little more riotous."

"If you are going to be as exacting as that with people," Maxwell returned, "you're going to disappoint yourself frightfully; and if you insist, you will make them hate you. People can't share your happiness any more than they can share your misery; it's as much as they can do to manage their own."

"But I did think my own father and mother might have entered into it a little more," she grieved. "Well, you are right, Brice, and I will try to hold in after this. It wasn't for myself I cared."

"I know," said Maxwell, so appreciatively that she felt all her loss made up to her, and shrunk closer to him in the buggy he was driving with a lax, absent-minded rein. "But I think a little less Fourth of July on my account would be better."

"Yes, you are wise, and I shall not say another word about it to anybody; just treat it as a common every-day event."

He laughed at what was so far from her possibilities, and began to tell her of the scheme for still another play that had occurred to him while they were talking with her father. She was interested in the scheme, but more interested in the involuntary workings of his genius, and she celebrated that till he had to beg her to stop, for she made him ashamed of himself even in the solitude of the woodland stretches they were passing through. Then he said, as if it were part of the same strain of thought, "You have to lose a lot of things in writing a play. Now, for instance, that beautiful green light there in the woods." He pointed to a depth of the bosage where it had almost an emerald quality, it was so vivid, so intense. "If I were writing a story

about two lovers in such a light, and how it bathed their figures and illumined their faces, I could make the reader feel it just as I did. I could make him see it. But if I were putting them in a play, I should have to trust the carpenter and the scene-painter for the effect; and you know what broken reeds they are."

"Yes," she sighed, "and some day I hope you will write novels. But now you've made such a success with this play that you must do some others, and when you've got two or three going steadily you can afford to take up a novel. It would be wicked to turn your back on the opportunity you've won."

He silently assented and said, "I shall be all the better novelist for waiting a year or two."

(To be continued.)

THE VISITOR

By Clinton Scollard

WITHOUT my door at morning-tide
There rang a summons hale and fair;
I roused and threw the portal wide,
And lo! young April there.

I saw the sunlight in her eyes,
And her anemone lips aglow;
She beckoned in beguiling wise;
I could not choose but go.

The grass beneath her quickening feet
Rippled with silvery green once more,
And many a rill ran singing sweet
By many a leaning shore.

She led me high among the hills
By paths that wilding wanderers use,
Where the magician Morn distils
The honey of his dews.

Bloom-secrecies she showed to me,
The coils through which all being stirs,
Till, spelled by her soft witchery,
My heart was wholly hers.

So now when up the year's bright slope
A call comes ringing o'er and o'er,
I fling the portal wide, in hope
'Tis April at the door.