THE QUEEN.

He knows, the rogue on the tree,
That over mountain and lea
The spring is coming, is coming,
Faster than eye can see.

Last week he was stark with cold,
Went heavy, songless and old.
Why, hark to the tune he is humming!
'Tis a song for the days of gold.

And her voice that calleth the swallows
Home, and the gold wren follows,
Nearer is coming and nearer
Thrilling the hills and hollows.

And he knows, the rogue on the tree,
'Tis the queen from over the sea.
Her voice is sweeter and dearer
Than any blackbird's can be.

AGAINST HUMAN NATURE.

BY MARIA LOUISE POOL.

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X. (Continued.)

Temple, to her great surprise, was finding it more and more difficult to say what she had come to say.

When she had started she had thought that it would not be very hard to tell Link that they would not think any more of what was said right after the preaching.

She was positive that nothing had been settled then. But evidently Link and his mother believed that everything was settled as they wished. The girl was growing bewildered and rebellious.

"Come," he repeated, "mar's got some quilt or sumpin' she wants to show you. An' I want you to tell me whar to put thur pump. I've done made up my mind I'll have a pump. You ain't goin' to draw water."

His voice sank to a tender tone and he leaned more closely upon Thimble, who maintained his position, ears cocked and long face seriously turned toward the valley.

"It isn't any matter about the pump," exclaimed Temple, almost with a savage intonation.

"But I ain't going to have you drawing water like the women round hyar," reasserted Link, "an' you sha'n't follow thur plough. Thur Dalvecker women ain't no call to follow thur plough," with some pride.

Temple sat up straight. She gripped the bridle. Instead of looking at her companion she gazed in a cowardly manner down at her bridle hand as she began to speak.

"What do you think I came over to Cain Creek for?"

"Oh, Temple, I hoped 'twas to see me."

"Yes, it was."

Now the girl lifted brave eyes and met the intent, masculine gaze, which did not swerve from her face.

"Yes," she said, "it was to see you and tell you that 'twas all wrong—our thinking of marrying, you know. I can't do hit—oh, no, I can't do hit!"

Dalvecker's face darkened. His mouth shut closely, but he stood quiet.

"I didn't say I would," went on Temple, her low voice seeming to her listener like a sharp knife. "You must know I didn't say I would; and somehow you've understood it so. They told me I ought not to say I'd think of hit—that men always thought it was the same as saying yes. I don't see why men should think so, though. But I can't think of hit. I've come to tell you so, Link. Oh, dear, Link, don't look like that! Please don't!"

To the pony's great surprise Temple suddenly flung one arm about Link's neck, while she bent her head down on the top of the young man's felt hat. Her own felt hat fell off at the same moment, revealing her short, tumbled, light hair, which looked almost ashen in this strong sunlight.

Dalvecker's mother, who had resumed the dropping of corn in the lot down in the valley, glanced up as Temple's head dropped down on that of her son. She smiled in the cavernous depths of her cape bonnet, and then she remarked to the man who was following with his hoe:

"That thur gal's what I call in lurv; an' no wonder. She's gurt er good man. My son ain't one of thur dad burned kind as 'll be rough on a 'oman. She's rid all thur way from Fairview hyar jest to see Link. She's in lurv, she is."

It will be observed that Mrs. Dalvecker, widow, unlike her son, had never been to school in Asheville.

She laughed as she ceased speaking. The man with the hoe had looked up at her first words. He also laughed. And he remarked that Link "allers did hev thur luck."

To this Mrs. Dalvecker responded that she hadn't nawthin' against Temple; but she reckoned as 'twar Temple as was in luck. Jest to think of thur plank house! An' Link war layin' out fur er pump!"

The thought of the pump seemed to incapacitate Mrs. Dalvecker from further speech.

Up on the height, young Dalvecker was not thinking that he was in luck.

He stood quite motionless, with Temple's arm about his neck. It seemed a long time before he could speak. Finally he said in a whisper:

"Don't be so sure you can't lurv me, Temple. I'd try to git along with jest a little lurv at first."

"'Tisn't that."

Temple raised her head and took her arm from the man's neck.

"It isn't any question of love, any way. I told you I didn't love you. I only had an affection for you, you know. But I didn't know but I might do more good by marrying you. You said how I could help you—keep you religious, and"——

Dalvecker's face had been growing blacker and blacker. Now he burst out:

"It's that damned young fool from Asheville!" he cried. "The feller with thur fiddle! You lurv him, Temple Crawford! Jim Frady said as how you met urp with him, an' went in his boat, an' fiddled, an' sung, an'—an'— It's him! He shan't fiddle no more! I'll kill him's I would er mad fyst!"

The girl did not try to reply at first to this outbreak. She gazed down at Link. At last she said solemnly:

"I don't lurv him, Link!"

Dalvecker believed her instantly. His face began to be less distorted.

"But it doesn't make any difference," said Temple; "about us, I mean."

"Why not? It's gurt to make a difference."

"No; I've made up my mind."

"Who is it, then?" fiercely.

"I don't know what you mean, Link."

"What man is it that you do lurv?"

The barbarian beneath Dalvecker's skin began again to come to the surface.

"Nobody."

"Then I'm going to hope."

"No, no; I wish you'd listen to me now, Link."

The man stood still and waited.

Things were growing clearer to the girl, as things will suddenly grow clearer sometimes in the fire of unusual excitement.

"I want to tell you what my plan of life is."

It was in this moment that Temple's plan of life became defined.

"Tell me. I'll try to bear it."

Dalvecker did hope. He could not help hoping since that assurance that Temple did not love the fiddler. There was positively nobody else. And this talk about not loving any one was unnatural and he did not believe it. Women talked so strangely sometimes. But they didn't mean much.

Temple was thinking of a power she had felt recently developed in her. She called it a religious power. When she prayed there was in her consciousness a fervid force which she knew moved others as well as herself. She must use this gift for the Lord, who had bestowed it upon her.

Yes, everything was clear to her now. It was God himself who had given her something by which she could bring people into the fold. It was God himself who was opening the way of great usefulness in letting her have the opportunity to be a helpmeet to a man like the preacher.

Couldn't she make Link Dalvecker see this? She saw it so strongly. She had not yet learned that another person cannot occupy our point of view, no matter how strenuously we try to put him there.

The girl's gaze went off to the mountains again. How grand, how glorious life was! How favored she was in being allowed to serve the Master! She had all her life felt such longings for she knew not what, of great work. And now this work had come to her hand. All her life she had wanted to fling herself unreservedly into something that should take her and hold her. All her life—and her life seemed long to her. She had a sense that she was very much older than this young man who could not seem to take his eyes from her face.

"I'm waiting for you to tell me," Dalvecker said at length.

He distrusted every moment of silence during which she looked like that.

Temple glanced at her companion, but for some reason she could not continue to look at him as she said:

"I've been trying to see my way clear, and now I do see it. I shall marry Mr. Mercer, and work with him. You see how—but, Link!"——

She stopped suddenly. She had been going to explain her plans, but the words all at once seemed useless, without meaning. She had not known that any one could show such agony as she saw in Link's face.

And, strangest of all, he did not seem to understand! And it came upon her with overwhelming force that she could never make him understand.

Link was standing up straight, his head flung back, his hot eyes fixed on Temple's eyes.

When she stopped speaking he did not break the silence. It was she who spoke again.

"Dear Link," she said, "it's all so plain to me."

"Do yo' lurv him?" he asked as he had just asked about "the fiddler."

There was surprise and impatience in her voice as she said:

"It's so odd that everybody asks that. No, I don't love him. Why should I? I can respect and admire him. If I did fancy I was in love I should just have to get over that, and then what better off should I be? Besides, I'm not the kind of girl to be in love."

Dalvecker made a quick movement as if he could bear no more. He raised his clenched hand into the air, crying out:

"No, I reckon you ain't thur kind of gal! If you was you'd stop tormentin' me so! You jest put me into hell with your ca'm kind of talk!"

Temple's face quivered with wistful wonder.

"I reckon you think you're in lurv," she said.

"I know I am," with ill-suppressed fury.

"Then it must be awful—awful," she responded impressively. "I'm glad I'm not that sort of person. There's suffering enough in this world without love—I mean that kind of love."

She gathered up the bridle which she had let fall on the pony's neck. But she continued to look at Dalvecker. She was inclined to be indignant with him. Of course, he could not really feel as he seemed to feel. She could not quite believe in the reality of his emotion. So true it is that what we have never felt we cannot understand.

"I'll be going now," she said.

"No! No!"

The young man seized the bridle so forcibly that the pony turned and nipped at his wrist, leaving a purple mark.

"You can't mean hit! You can't mean hit!"

Dalvecker choked on the words. And yet it seemed to him that he was giving his whole strength to the effort to control himself. Because he did not burst forth into wild oaths, because he did not tear Temple from the saddle, take her to the house yonder and shut her up there, he was under the belief that he was controlling himself.

"We won't talk any more. I'm going," she said, "and I mean it; I mean it all. But I can't tell you how sory I am. Can't we be just the same friends, Link?"

But Dalvecker could not answer. He nodded vaguely. It was as if he were in the grasp of some malignant monster that was shaking him up and down, and he was dangling helpless in that grasp.

He saw Temple ride away. His eyes seemed to have flames in them.

He could not remember the time when he had not meant to have that girl for his wife. And he had always had what he meant to have.

At the topmost part of the path along which Temple had come she stopped her pony and turned about. The young man saw her wave her hand at him. He heard her cry:

"Goodby, Link! Goodby! I want you to come and see me!"

Link took off his hat and waved it. His hand appeared to perform the act without any command from his mind.

When the girl was out of sight Dalvecker had sense enough to know that he must go back to his ploughing, or his mother would come and question him.

He turned himself toward his home. It was only a few moments before that he had been planning how to make the work easier for Temple. There was the house, with the green about it; there was his mother going right on dropping corn, and old Chris Jinks was covering it. Dalvecker could hear the sound of the hoe as it slid under the earth. Jinks's little boy was beneath an apple tree firing stones at a robin's nest.

Dalvecker's outward sense told him that the farm had never looked so well. And he resented that fact.

He wanted to grip hold of something. There was nothing to grip, however. He thrust his hands into his pockets.

"It's just—oh!"—— He paused, for there was no word strong enough. "Oh, it's just hell!" he whispered.

Then he walked down to where his horses were calmly standing in the freshly turned earth.

XI.

THE MOTHER'S LETTER.

Mrs. Dalvecker saw her son return to his plough after his interview with his sweetheart.

She set down the basket which held the seed corn and went striding over the furrows to him. She wanted to tell him again what a lucky gal Temple Crawford was.

She waited until his horses came back along the line of their work.

Link was tempted to turn and run away, but he came on, ramming the plough furiously down into the earth that rolled richly away from the share. A flock of hens was industriously pecking along behind him.

"Jest stop, will yo'?" commanded the woman.

The young man stopped. He pulled the great flap of his hat far over his face, and waited.

"Did yo' tell her 'bout thur pump?" asked the mother.

Link nodded.

"Thur ain't no pump on none of thur mountings."

Having said this with an air of pride, Mrs. Dalvecker spat emphatically, and then drew her hand down over her mouth to remove any too visible traces of expectoration.

"I reckon that Crawford gal ain't none too good to draw water same's her man's dad an' mam hev drawed."

These words were tempered with a good-natured laugh.

"She ain't gwine ter draw water hyar," was the response.

Mrs. Dalvecker pushed her sun-bonnet back quickly.

"Hev you-uns an' her ben quarrilin'?" she asked sharply. "She mought better luke out. Thur ain't no sech chance's Link Dalvecker nowhars in Limestone Township. She better luke out fur herself."

There was no response to this. Link stood sullenly looking at his mother.

"I hope you-uns didn't give in to her in no ways," said Mrs. Dalvecker. "Yo' mus' jest take yer stand an' be boss from thur fust."

Link turned away. He grasped the plough handles so that his finger nails showed white with the strain.

"Mar," he said, "yo' shurt urp. I'm gwine ter boss my own business. Mebby me an' Temple sha'n't hitch no ways."

"Wha-at!"

Link felt beside himself.

"Mar," he said again, "will yo' shurt urp?"

He hurriedly unhooked the horses and sent them off with the chains dangling against their legs. He walked after them. He would have liked to put a thousand miles between him and every human being who had a right to speak to him. He had a dreadful feeling like hatred toward Temple. "To be friends with her!" she had said.

Mrs. Dalvecker stood in the ploughed field with her sun-bonnet tipped back, watching her boy.

As she watched she mechanically pulled from somewhere in her dress a small paper bag of snuff, poured a little pile into the dingy palm of her hand and then tossed the pile into her mouth. She tossed so dextrously that she did not lose a grain, but it was all done mechanically. She wanted consolation, and she applied to her snuff bag without knowing that she did so.

She did not stand long. She turned in the direction of the large barn which was at the top of the field. She walked toward it with those long steps that so often characterized the walk of the mountain women.

"What's urp?" asked Chris Jinks, glad of an opportunity to rest on his hoe handle.

"Nawthin'" was the answer. "Yo' go on er plantin'."

Jinks continued to rest his long length on his tool while he watched Mrs. Dalvecker, who disappeared in the dark cavern of the barn. She very soon reappeared, now mounted on a tall roan horse. She cantered off over the field and was soon out of sight in the way taken by Temple.

"She lied," said Jinks to himself, taking off his hat and passing his hand over his head. "Sumpin' is urp. Him an' her has fought. Durned ef I wanter hev Link Dalvecker turned against me. He's all right ef he has what he wants. But ef he don't hev hit"——

Jinks passed his hand over his head again and neglected to finish his sentence.

The long legs of the roan took him swiftly over the rough way. Mrs. Dalvecker was sitting on a man's saddle, but she maintained her position with a negligent security that was an accomplishment possessed by nearly every woman hereabouts. Her little wad of snuff was safely lodged beneath her lower lip; her bonnet was pushed back so that the upper part of her yellow forehead and the front of her grizzled hair were visible, but the pasteboard projected so that her mouth and chin were concealed.

This horsewoman paused and deliberated a moment when she had reached the place where Temple had appeared less than an hour ago.

Then Mrs. Dalvecker turned right into the woods. She calmly put her steed over fallen trees and zig-zag fences, and the gaunt animal never flinched. He set his bony face forward in a brave way that was habitual with him.

In half an hour this horsewoman came out on a path that wound upward toward the west. She stopped her horse and looked down the path.

"She mought hev gone," she said aloud, "but I reckon she hain't."

She was right in her reckoning, for it was hardly a moment before a white pony with a girl on his back came in sight still further down the mountain.

Temple was riding slowly, Thimble going at his little amble. The girl had her hat in her hand, and sunlight and shadow were continually flecking her face and figure as she came forward.

Mrs. Dalvecker cantered toward her and stopped in front of her.

"Howdy," she said, with some sharpness.

Thimble stopped of his own accord, knowing his manners, and his rider responded:

"Howdy," in some surprise.

"I curm fur yo'," remarked the woman, peremptorily.

"What?"

"I curm fur yo,—I 'low you'll go back right now along of me."

Temple was silent, gazing at Link's mother, who had hitherto been all smiles to her.

"No," said the girl, "I'm not going back."

There was a heat in her face and in her eyes, but she spoke quite calmly. She was asking herself if it were possible that Link had been complaining to his mother.

"You be," was the response. "Thur's Link—he's er ravin' urp an' down thur crick. He's bound ter do his'ef er damage. An' I'm bound ter stop hit. Hyar's you curmin' down ter see him; some gals don't be a cavortin' round arter their fellers in this style. Some gals waits to home fur thur men to curm to see um. But you jest run arter my boy, an' then you quarril with him, an' he's that mad I shouldn't wonder ef he'd shot his'ef 'fore this. You curm long er me now, right smart. I ain't feared of no upstart gals as runs arter their men. An' he layin' out ter put in er pump!"

It was as if the memory of the pump was too much for Mrs. Dalvecker. She bent forward and put a yellow, skinny hand on Temple's arm, grasping it tightly.

The girl's eyes dilated and a flush deepened on her face and neck. After a moment she said:

"I wish you wouldn't touch me. I don't like to be touched."

She glanced down and saw the nails, with their black rims, on her companion's hands. She shuddered. She was trying to remember that she had religion. Surely this was a time when she ought to make use of such a possession.

"Don't like ter be touched!" repeated Mrs. Dalvecker. "I don't know's I care. What you ben doin' to my son? My son who's better'n you-uns any day. An' he layin' out fur er pump. I say you mought drar water. An' yo' runnin' arter him!"

Mrs. Dalvecker was gradually raising her voice. A narrow yellow stream was starting from each corner of her mouth and trickling down.

"You mustn't touch me," said Temple again. She was aware that a shudder ran over her at the contact of that hand.

Then all at once a flood of pity and longing came into her soul. What did all this matter? What did anything in the world matter when we thought of the Lord who had loved us and died for us?

He had suffered everything, borne everything for our sakes. And should not she, Temple Crawford, gladly bear such discomfort as this?

Mrs. Dalvecker was looking in the girl's face, and she saw the sudden and, to her, mysterious change that came to it.

In her surprise she released the arm, staring as she did so.

It was Temple who now bent forward and touched the woman's shoulder, her fresh young eyes seeking the faded and sunken ones, with a look in them that stirred and strangely moved Mrs. Dalvecker.

She had been like an animal rushing out to protect its young. Link was suffering. This girl had made him suffer. Therefore, she sought this girl that she might make her suffer also, if she would not restore happiness to Link.

But now, as the eyes of the two women met, Mrs. Dalvecker's indignation began to subside, she could not tell why.

Temple, in her simplicity, went straight to the thing uppermost in her thoughts.

"You see," she said, "I found the Lord at the preaching the other night."

"Did yo'?"

Mrs. Dalvecker asked the question gently. She had been to preaching many times in her youth and once she thought she had "experienced." But it did not last. That was years ago. She had given up going to preaching. She would have said that she laid out to have religion before she died. She wanted to "die rejoicing."

"I'm trying to be good," said Temple. "Oh, I am certainly trying! And to live near to good things, you know."

She removed her hand from the woman's shoulder and leaned it on the withers of the tall roan, bending forward from her saddle as she did so, her whole force seeming to pour forth the light of aspiration and intense belief.

"Perhaps you could help me," she said, her voice thrilling along the nerves of her listener, and taking the woman back to those young days when life was full of sensation.

"Help yo'?" said Mrs. Dalvecker. "I can't—I can't. I never gurt no religion as stayed by me—none. Mebbe thur preachers wa'n't thur right kind. Mebbe my heart war like thur nether millstone. 'Tis now, I reckon."

"No, oh, no! You have such a kind heart, dear friend. Only it's the natural heart. We must get rid of that, you know; mustn't we? I want you to do something for me to-night. Will you? Will you?"

Impossible to describe the power of moving and winning that there was in Temple's voice and eyes. There was an overflow of sincerest well-wishing, a kind of love going out from her.

"Ter-night?" asked the woman. "Thur ain't nawthin' I kin do ter-night."

"Oh, yes, there is. Will you remember? This evening, when the sun gets to the top of the Twin Brothers, will you pray for your soul just as you did when you were young? And I shall pray for you, too, at that very time. And God will hear us. I know He will. He has promised. And He isn't like us; He never forgets a promise."

Mrs. Dalvecker's gaze was on the illuminated face so near her. She hardly recognized herself. She had been dull for so many years, save where her son was concerned. Now a chill went down her spine, while at the same time a warmth came to her heart.

"I reckon I'll promise," she said, no longer using her loud, strident tones.

"I knew you would," said Temple, ardently, "I knew you would. We shall have a blessing—we surely shall. Goodby."

Temple sat up straight. The pony started forward, and had gone a few rods, when the woman roused herself and called after the girl.

"Thur's Link, yo' know!" she shouted.

Temple turned.

"He'll explain it all," she answered. "Do make him know that I must do my own work. The Lord has called me."

She shook the lines on Thimble's neck. But she turned once more to see the woman motionless on the tall roan.

When Mrs. Dalvecker reached home she was still dazed. There was Chris Jinks leaning on his hoe as if he had not moved during her absence. She rode into the barn, got off her horse, and pulled saddle and bridle from him. Then she sat down quickly on an upturned half-bushel measure; she covered her face with her hands. It had been years since any tears had come to her eyes, but now they came and overflowed. Inextricably mixed in her mind were the face and the tones of the young girl she had just left, and the thoughts of religion, and God, and Heaven, and a vague, strong longing to be something more than what she was, and different from what she was. The same longings that had been in her heart in her youth, and which in later years she had supposed belonged only to youth.

All her anger against Temple was gone. She could not be angry with her, she did not know why.

Temple rode directly home. But she could not rest. She wanted to be at work for God all the time.

When Bartholomew came slouching forward to take the pony, she asked him if he had been to preaching. He said, "Naw'm; reckoned he didn't care fur hit."

The girl stood watching the youth as he unsaddled Thimble and then took a bunch of hay to rub off the animal. He rubbed slowly, up and down, making a kind of hissing noise as he did so.

"Bart," said the girl softly. Bart turned his heavy face, hardly raising his sullen eyes as he did so.

But Temple did not shrink. She felt as if an inhaustible fountain of love was in her heart, love that could take in this inert, vicious mass before her.

"Well, 'um," said the boy at last.

Temple came nearer.

"I'm afraid I haven't always kept my temper toward you as I ought," she said.

She was telling herself that she certainly did feel lovingly toward even Bart; and if she could feel lovingly toward him, it must be that she really had religion.

No response to her remark.

"And I want you to forgive me," she said.

No response, save a slight grunt. The boy took a fresh bunch of hay and rubbed the pony's flank.

"You must forgive me," insisted Temple. "Can't you?"

"Yes, 'um. I kin forgive yo' well enough. I don't care how yo' treat me. 'Tain't nawthin' to me."

The girl was silent. She was wondering if there were any way to reach Bart. As she stood, there was a slight noise at the door of the shed; then a little whine. She looked around. The Newfoundland was in the doorway. He was standing on three legs; his left front paw was dangling helplessly. A streak of damp red went down the white hair of his chest.

Temple cried out. Her face grew crimson and then white. She flung herself on the dog, and clasped him in her arms. She had wondered why he had not followed her to Cain Creek.

Yucatan winced and whined, but he licked his mistress' cheek and wagged his tail.

On the floor, with her dog in her arms, Temple lifted a furious face toward Bart, who had dropped his wisps of hay and now leaned against the wall, not looking at anything.

"You did hit!" cried the girl. "Oh!" bending her head to Yucatan's neck, "my own dog! my own true dog!"

Then, with head up again, and more furiously than before:

"You did hit! You—you villain! Oh, I shall kill you some day!"

"Yes, 'um," said the boy. "Thur critter snapped at me. I flung er sharp rock. 'Twas down in thur bresh, thur! Sally seen me, or I'd er lied 'bout hit."

Temple rose, gently detaching herself from Yucatan. Her hot eyes gazed seachingly about. There was the handle of a rake, broken from the rake itself. She ran toward it, seized it, swung it furiously and it came cracking down upon Bart's shoulders.

Then it dropped from the girl's hand as if it had been a red-hot iron bar. She stood one instant glaring at the boy, then she covered her face with her hands and moaned, self-contempt stinging her intolerably.

But the boy did not moan. He had shrunk when the blow fell; he tried to dodge it, but, having taken it, he pressed his lips together in silence. He was very ugly to look at as he stood there.

After a moment the girl removed her hands. She gazed at her companion and seemed to try to speak. There was a dreadful fight going on in her soul.

Something was telling her to ask Bart's forgiveness; and something was telling her not to do so.

Yucatan crept nearer to her and put his head on her foot.

"Bart," said Temple, sharply, "go and tell Sally to come here."

"Yes, 'um," answered Bart, and he moved toward the door. But he stopped before he left the shed. He stopped to say, in his husky voice:

"I'm glad I hain't gurt religion, I am."

Then he went out.

When the yellow woman reached the shed ten minutes later she found Temple lying on the floor and the dog stretched beside her. The pony was standing near, a long, dry blade from a cornstalk depending from his mouth.

But Sally did not see Thimble; she scarcely saw the dog, because of her anxiety about her young mistress. Temple was sobbing heavily and drily; she was absolutely gasping with the agony she was suffering.

Sally knelt down by Temple; she put her great, muscular hand on the hot forehead.

"Now, don't yer take on so, Miss Temple. Yo' take everything so hard—so dreffle hard. Yo' suffer so, yo' do. Curm now, de dawg'll be all right. His leg's hurt, dat's 'bout all. We'll hev Mis' Ammidown out hyar, an' put it in two sticks. Laws, Miss Temple, we'll fotch him 'round all right. Don't take on so! Bart am er limb er Satan, shore!"

Sally sat down and lifted Temple into her arms.

"My own dog!" said Temple, brokenly, "my true lurv! My Yucatan, that's always lurved me best of all! And, oh, Sally, I thought I was a Christian! And I did want to kill Bart. I struck him, I tell you, Sally," a fierce flash coming to her eyes, "I just wish I'd struck him harder!"

"Bart ain't no 'count," soothingly answered Sally.

Temple was silent a moment. She was still sobbing. Then she said:

"Perhaps Bart'll stop my being a Christian and helping to save souls."

"Yo' jes' be reasonable," soothingly, from Sally. "Bart can't. Yo' jes' go right ter Asheville arter Mis' Ammidown ergin. It'll take urp yer mind, won't it, honey? Yo' jes' go."

Without waiting for any answer, Sally put the saddle again on the pony's back. She bridled him; then, with her arm thrust through the bridle, she stooped over her mistress, who was now sitting on the floor with her hand on Yucatan's head.

The yellow woman smoothed the girl's hair, picked up her hat and put it on.

"We jes' gurt to hev Mis' Ammidown," she said.

Temple made no response. She rose and got into the saddle. She looked down at the dog, who had risen piteously to his three legs, and who was whining to accompany his mistress.

Temple's lip quivered.

"You take care of him, Sally," she said.

It seemed to Mrs. Ammidown and to most of the guests at Battery Park Hotel that it was still rather early in the day when Miss Crawford's pony, with Miss Crawford on his back, came galloping toward the side entrance.

The girl came toward the side because she saw her friend strolling along a path with a book in her hand. Mrs. Ammidown usually had a book in her hand.

"There's that Crawford girl," said a lady who was sitting on a bench a few yards away. "I don't know what there is that seems so interesting"——

"I know," said Mrs. Ammidown, calmly interrupting, "it's because she is so suggestive, and she makes your blood go as it used to go when you were twenty years old. And anybody who can do that for us"——

The speaker smiled instead of finishing her sentence. She walked out quickly toward Temple, who was slowly walking her horse.

This was the first time the girl had come to Asheville without previously changing her shabby short dress and old velvet coat for the one decent, ordinary suit that she owned.

"It's Yucatan this time," said Temple, without any preliminary salutation. "And Bart did it again. I want you to come quick and fix his leg."

There were times when Mrs. Ammidown acted with the leisurely appearing promptness of the physician. She did so now. She ordered her horse saddled and then she took Temple to her own room while she made herself ready.

"I should advise you to send Bartholomew away," she remarked, as she stood before the glass braiding her hair tightly for the ride.

"I do; I have. But he comes back," was the answer. "He hasn't any place to stay. I'm sorry for him, and I keep him."

The girl would not sit. She was standing with her back against the wall. Her hat was on the floor beside her, her hands were clasped tightly and hanging in front of her.

"I think," said Temple, in a low voice that yet was intensely piercing, "I think that he will be the means of my going to hell."

Mrs. Ammidown turned quickly. The braid slipped from her fingers.

"Worse than that," went on Temple in the same tone, "he will stop me from being a good woman and serving God."

Mrs. Ammidown went quickly to the girl and lifted her clasped hands in her own warm grasp.

"How can he do that?"

She put the question tenderly. She hardly dared to show how much she was moved. Always when she was with Temple she was surprised at the girl's power to move her.

"Because he makes me hate him; he makes me want to kill him. I struck him just now. And when I struck him I should have been glad to see him fall down dead. Oh! How wicked I am!"

She did not raise her voice. She fixed her eyes on the face before her, and Mrs. Ammidown felt her own face yielding and trembling.

But she pulled herself quickly together, and smiled.

"Oh, yes; we're all wicked. But don't let us dwell on the fact. And let us remember that God takes account of our provocations; and God knows just the kind of creature Bartholomew is."

She went back to the mirror.

"You think He will forgive me?" with painful earnestness.

"I know He will."

Neither spoke for a few moments. At last Temple asked timidly:

"Do you think that Mr. Mercer would still consider that he—that I"——

Here the speaker paused and blushed deeply.

Mrs. Ammidown dropped the brush she held. She gazed silently at her companion, and as she gazed she became more and more convinced that Temple was not now referring to religion.

"That Mr. Mercer would consider?" she repeated interrogatively and with unconscious sternness. She was asking herself if her brother could possibly——

"I was wondering if he would think I was still worthy to help him in his work," replied Temple now, with no blush and no girlish consciousness. Indeed, she did not understand why she had blushed.

"To help him?"

"Yes; be his wife, you know, and share his work."

"What did you say?"

There came a gleam into the woman's eyes.

Temple was now becoming calmer.

"Yes," she said. "He asked me. I'm to give him my answer in a day or two."

"He asked you?"

"Yes. I know I'm inexperienced and—and—but I hope I could learn"——

"You are going to say yes, then?"

The gleam was still in Mrs. Ammidown's eyes, and there was now an incisiveness coming to her voice in place of the mere surprise.

"Yes," answered Temple.

"Did he tell you he loved you?"

"Oh, no. It's not a question of love."

"Only of marriage, then?"

"You know," said Temple, "that I should have to marry him so that I might go with him, and work with him, and"——

"Will you stop talking like that?" sharply.

"Oh, Mrs. Ammidown! Don't you think I'm right?"

"I know you are not right."

Temple gazed straight before her without speaking.

Mrs. Ammidown stooped and picked up the hairbrush from the floor. She glanced at the girl, but did not break the silence. She saw the peculiar expression of resolution coming to Temple's mouth, and what seemed a certain squaring of the chin.

"I am convinced that I'm right," said the girl. "And when I'm convinced of a thing I have to do it. If I were that kind of a girl who thinks of love"—— She hesitated and the other finished the sentence for her.

"But since you have a cold temperament and cannot love"——

"Yes, Mrs. Ammidown," advancing quickly toward that lady. "That's just it. Have you read my mother's letter?"

"I have read it twice—three times."

"Well, I'm going to do as my mother counsels."

That afternoon when Mrs. Ammidown was back again from her surgical work for Yucatan she sat down with Mrs. Crawford's letter in her hand for one more perusal before she returned it to its owner.

This is the letter which this mother had left to influence her daughter. The words were written in slender, unimpressive characters, strangely at variance with their meaning.

"My precious little girl, as you are all I have that is precious, it is for you that I have the strongest desire that is left to me. And I have always had strong desires—strong—deep—burning. That's why I have been so unhappy. I ought only to have cared a little—loved a little, or not any, hoped a little, then I could have been placid and comfortable. Instead, I have been agitated and uncomfortable. I have flung away the comfort of years for the rapture of moments. And the moments have been very few.

"It is love that brings rapture. It is love that brings misery. Therefore, never love. Mind, I am not saying never marry. If some good, upright man wants you for his wife I tell you to say yes to him—say yes. Then you will never know happiness; but you will never know misery. And love has days of wretchedness for every second of bliss. And after a little while, oh, such a very little while, there is no happiness at all. He—your possible lover and husband—will get tired of you long before you have ceased to think of him with pulses growing fast. You will not believe it now, but he'll make you believe it. Then you will begin to eat your heart. It is not well for a woman to spend her best years eating her heart. That's what I did. And I am going to die of it sooner than you would. You are a great deal stronger than I ever was.

"Your father was what they call in love with me. When I see how cold his eyes are when they rest upon me now, I think how much better it would have been if he had never had more than a friendship for me, and I for him; then I should not have had this love to remember and to long for. That is the way it is. The woman remembers and longs. The man grows tired and wants a new love. Any way he doesn't want the old love.

"And there is that disgusting revulsion that is liable to come when disillusion comes. When the glamour is gone, it is not that you see more correctly, it is that the face you did love is not half as attractive as it really is. At first it was more beautiful than reality, then it is more ugly than reality.

"I do not suppose that your father is a bad man. All men are like him in this particular. Once he could not live unless I smiled upon him. Now he does not know whether I smile or not.

"He knew how to make love. No human being ever knew how better than he.

"I was seventeen when he came down to my father's house. That was in Louisiana, you know. At seventeen a Louisiana girl is as old as a Northern woman of half a dozen more years.

"He wakened my heart. I hope and pray you will never know what it means to have your heart awakened. Oh, I could tell you in words of fire all he was to me then! He is sitting here in the room with me now as I write. Sometimes he glances at me and it is as he looked at a chair or a log. The curse is that I remember what there can be in his eyes. I am only able to write a few lines before I must rest. I cough so, and then I am so tired. But I shall finish this before I die. And you, my little girl, will have my dying words. You know the vision of the dying is very clear. I see unto the future, and I tell you to fly from love as from death. You will not read this until you are old enough to understand it.

"I am not beautiful any more; and if I were I should not now be novel. After all, it is novelty more than beauty or charm that attracts men. There isn't any such thing as constancy. Remember that, not in the male heart——

"It is three weeks since I wrote the last lines. I have just been reading them over. They are not half strong enough. And I thought I could write such words as would be like a hot iron to burn into you that it is misery to love, save coolly, reasonably, and love is never cool or reasonable. But there are no such words, or if there are I am too weak and sick to find them.

"Sometimes when my cousin Rosalind comes up from the other plantation, I see your father go out and take her off her horse, and I catch in his eyes that look which used to be there for me. Not that I care now. He has that way with him, and women like it. I'm almost sure he left some one up North who loved him and believed in him. And then he fell in love with me.

"Never let a man look at you in that way—never.

"I wish I could find those words that would mean enough, and be strong enough. When I am coughing and lying awake nights, I am trying all the time to find those strong words. There must be some such words that would make you remember.

"Bear in mind that I am speaking to you from my grave. If you bear that with you, you may remember not to love, not to go one step in the way with love. He is a shining angel at first. But turn from him. Perhaps you will have a cold temperament, one of those which know nothing keenly and warmly. Constantly, before you were born, I prayed that you might be cold. And God sometimes answers prayer.

"Now I am so tired that I will wait until tomorrow before I finish this——

"It is to-morrow, and I am sure it is the last. Dear little daughter, your cool hands might have helped my hot heart. But no; the grave is cool. And after all I could not find words strong enough to tell you not to love."

Mrs. Ammidown dropped the sheets in her lap.

"What, a letter to leave!" she said to herself. "How morbid!"

As she sat there thinking of it and what its effect must be on a girl like Temple, she heard footsteps in the hall, then a knock on her door.

"May I come in?" asked her brother.

(To be continued.)

SEE A NAIL, DON'T PICK IT UP.

From The St. Louis Globe Democrat.

Mr. William Garrett made recently the statement that wire nails are now sold so cheaply that if a carpenter drops a nail it is cheaper to let it lie than to stoop and pick it up, and it is claimed that one keg out of five is never used, but goes to waste. A statistician figuring this out, and assuming that it takes a carpenter ten seconds to pick up a nail, and that his time is worth 30 cents an hour, remarks that the recovery of the nail he has dropped would cost .083c. The money value of the nail is .0077c.; that is, it would not pay to pick up ten nails if it took ten seconds of time worth 30 cents an hour. Ordinary men who are not very quick can, however, pick up a nail on a moderately clean floor in five seconds. Assuming that this is a better average than the ten seconds, and that we are paying the carpenter only 25 cents an hour, it will still cost to recover the nail .0347c., which is nearly five times the value of an individual nail. There is, therefore, a considerable factor of safety in the original calculation, and we are bound to believe that it will not pay to pick up nails. Such a calculation brings out clearly the marvellous reduction in prices due to inventive genius. The lurking fallacy is that while it may not pay to stoop for each nail, it still may be worth while for an economical man at the end of his work to stoop down once and sweep up in a single handful the nails he has been dropping all day.

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MEN'S FASHIONS.

The De Joinville scarf is steadily growing in favor. Men have discovered that the wearer can tie and adjust it according to his individual taste or fancy, and, unlike most scarfs, however it may be tied, it looks well. A new London device is a little nickel clamp used for keeping the De Joinville in its folds. This saves tacking it, and allows it to be tied as easily as any other scarf. Perpendicular stripes of red and white on black and navy ground in soft jasper silks are fashionable. Bright tartan plaids, in basket silks, are also much worn, and bright Persian effects continue in style.

The new London scarf, "The Gaspard," has just been introduced here, and promises to become popular. It is a "made-up" scarf, has flowing ends, is square, and ties up like a four-in-hand. The neckband is long and therefore forms a small knot, with ends fairly well spread out. The materials used are soft silks, to avoid a stiff knot. Neat but bright figures in two colors, on dark grounds, such as black, myrtle, olive, wine, maroon and navy, are new.

The increased demand for men's dressing-gowns has developed new and very attractive materials. Soft vicuna in half-inch checks of gray and white, brown and white, and navy and white, are very "swell," the quality of the material setting off the pattern and giving it a warm, comfortable appearance. These garments are lined and quilted throughout. They have two rows of buttons, and tie with a heavy silk cord about the waist. The costliest dressing-gown is made of black corded silk, lined and quilted throughout with crimson or royal blue surah silk, the silk cord with which this garment is finished and the heavy silk girdle about the waist match the lining. The latest novelty in this way is a gown made from a steamer rug. The patterns are large plaids of brown, blue or dark crimson on black, brown or navy blue. These are heavy and warm, and are made without lining. A heavy wool girdle fastens about the waist, and the garment closes with three buttons.

The new turn-over collar, introduced last year, is slowly but steadily gaining ground. The band is two inches high, and the collar turns over two and a quarter inches, just covering the band. It has a space of one and one-eighth inch, allowing a bow or the popular small knot, flowing-end scarf to be tied comfortably. When on it has the appearance of a straight standing collar. It was first introduced by a prominent outfitter in London. The turn-over point collars are getting higher and the points larger, but they differ from the so long popular shape in that the space at the top is less, and it hugs the neck more. It certainly looks well, and seems to harmonize with the close-fitting outer garments. A two-and-a-half inch collar is not too high to be in style.

The new reindeer gloves of unfinished leather, in color of a soft tan-brown, are popular now. They are lined with gray squirrel, which lining, unlike lambskin, is very soft, warm and pleasant to the touch. These gloves are of English manufacture, and are quite expensive. The recent cold weather has brought them to the front. For cold weather driving, new and very comfortable gloves are Ringwoods. These are hand knit lambswool of dark mixtures, and the palm and inside fingers are reinforced with tan dog or deer skin. These are warm enough without lining, and come well up on the wrist, acting as pulse-warmers.

WHO IS THE "BEST MAN" IN CONGRESS?

From The Washington Post.

Who is the best man in Congress physically? That was the question a group of gentlemen were discussing in a snug corner at Page's, the inquiry being apropos some recent attempts at fisticuffs on the floor of the House. Nobody could answer with certainty, though it was regarded as a pretty sure thing that among 356 men there were quite a number who would be able to give a good account of themselves in a scrapping match.

One gentleman remarked that Mr. Boutelle, of Maine, was the possessor of a superb physique, and another said that Champ Clark, of Missouri, had been known to lift 1,250 dead weight, though that was some years ago.

"I have an idea," said Mr. Louis R. Edwards, "that Representative George W. Ray, of Norwich, N. Y., is among the very best men in the present Congress. He is one of the most powerful men, physically, I ever knew, and his muscles are like steel. He has the advantage of a superb constitution, the result of country breeding, having passed his youthful days on a farm. I saw four men tackle him once with the intention of doing him up, whereupon Ray lit on the quartet and thrashed every one of them till they begged for mercy. I would be sorry for any one man that would try conclusions with him in a rough-and-tumble fight."

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