

"A poet, a writer, needs only the mental. What use has he for a beautiful body that registers clearly mental emotions? And the painter wants an eye for form and color, and the musician an ear for time and tune, and the mere drudge has no need for mental gifts. But there is one art in which all she has would be used, for which they are all necessary—the delicate, expressive body, the rich voice, the power of mental transposition. The actor, who absorbs and then reflects from himself other human lives, needs them all, but needs not much more. This is her end, but how to reach it? Before her are endless difficulties. Seas must be crossed, poverty must be endured, loneliness, want. She must be content to wait long before she can even get her feet upon the path. If she has made blunders in the past, if she has weighted herself with a burden which she must bear to the end, she must bear the burden bravely and labor on. There is no use in walling and repentance here. The next world is the place for that. This life is too short. By our errors we see deeper into life. They help us." She waited for awhile. "If she does all this—if she waits patiently, if she is never cast down, never desponds, never forgets her end, moves straight toward it, bending men and things most unlikely to her purpose—she must succeed at last. Men and things are plastic. They part to the right and left when one comes among them moving in a straight line to one end. I know it by my own little experience," she said. "Long years ago I resolved to be sent to school. It seemed a thing utterly out of my power, but I waited. I watched. I collected clothes, I wrote, took my place at the school. When all was ready, I bore with my full force on the Boer woman, and she sent me at last. It was a small thing, but life is made up of small things, as body is built up of cells. What has been done in small things can be done in large, shall be," she said softly. Waldo listened. To him the words were no confession, no glimpse into the strong, proud, restless heart of the woman. They were general words with a general application. He looked up into the sparkling sky with dull eyes. "Yes," he said; "but when we lie and think and think we see that there is nothing worth doing. The universe is so large, and man is so small!" She shook her head quickly. "But we must not think so far. It is madness; it is a disease. We know that no man's work is great and stands forever. Moses is dead and the prophets, and the books that our grandmothers read on the mold is eating. Your poet and painter and actor—before the shouts that applaud them have died their names grow strange; they are milestones that the world has passed. Men have set their mark on mankind forever, as they thought, but time has washed it out as it has washed out mountains and continents." She raised herself on her elbow. "And what if we could help mankind and leave the traces of our work upon it to the end? Mankind is only an ephemeral blossom on the tree of time. There were others before it opened; there will be others after it has fallen. Where was the man in the time of the dicyonodot and when hoary monsters wallowed in the mud? Will he be found in the eons that are to come? We are sparks, we are shadows, we are pollen, which the next wind will carry away. We are dying already. It is all a dream. "I know that thought. When the fever of living is on us, when the desire to become, to know, to do, is driving us mad, we can use it as an anodyne to still the fever and cool our beating pulses. But it is a poison, not a food. If we live on it, it will turn our blood to ice. We might as well be dead. We must not, Waldo. I want your life to be beautiful, to end in something. You are nobler and stronger than I," she said, "and as much better as one of God's great angels is better than a sinning man. Your life must go for something." "Yes; we will work," he said. She moved closer to him and lay still, his black curls touching her smooth little head. Doss, who had laid at his master's side, climbed over the bench and curled himself up in her lap. She drew her skirt up over him, and the three sat motionless for a long time. "Waldo," she said suddenly, "they are laughing at us." "Who?" he asked, starting up. "They—the stars!" she said softly. "Do you not see? There is a little, white, mocking finger pointing down at us from each one of them! We are talking of tomorrow and tomorrow, and our hearts are so strong; we are not thinking of something that can touch us softly in the dark and make us still forever. They are laughing at us, Waldo." Both sat looking upward. "Do you ever pray?" he asked her in a low voice. "No." "I never do, but I might when I look up there. I will tell you," he added, in a still lower voice, "where I could pray. If there were a wall of rock on the edge of a world, and one rock stretched out far, far into space, and I stood alone upon it, alone, with stars above me and stars below me—I would not say anything, but the feeling would be prayer." There was an end to their conversation after that, and Doss fell asleep on her knee. At last the night wind grew very chilly. "Ah," she said, shivering, and drawing the skirt about her shoulders, "I am cold. Inspan the horses, and call me when you are ready." She slipped down and walked toward the house. Doss stiffly following her, not pleased at being roused. At the door she met Gregory. "I have been looking for you everywhere; may I not drive you home?" he said. "Waldo drives me," she replied, pass-

ing on, and it appeared to Gregory that she looked at him in the old way, without seeing him. But before she had reached the door an idea had occurred to her, for she turned. "If you wish to drive me, you may." Gregory went to look for Em, whom he found pouring out coffee in the back room. He put his hand quickly on her shoulder. "You must ride with Waldo; I am going to drive your cousin home." "But I can't come just now, Greg. I promised Tani' Sannie Muller to look after the things while she went to rest a little." "Well, you can come presently, can't you? I didn't say you were to come now. I'm sick of this thing," said Gregory, turning sharply on his heel. "Why must I sit up the whole night because your stepmother chooses to get married?" "Oh, it's all right, Greg. I only meant"— But he did not hear her, and a maud had come up to have his cup filled. An hour after Waldo came in to look for her and found her still busy at the table. "The horses are ready," he said, "but if you would like to have one dance more I will wait." She shook her head wearily. "No, I am quite ready. I want to go." And soon they were on the sandy road the buggy had traveled an hour before. Their horses, with heads close together, nodding sleepily as they walked in the starlight, you might have counted the rise and fall of their feet in the sand, and Waldo in his saddle nodded drowsily also. Only Em was awake, and watched the starlight road with wide open eyes. At last she spoke. "I wonder if all people feel so old, so very old, when they get to be 17?" "Not older than before," said Waldo, sleepily, pulling at his bridle. Presently she said again: "I wish I could have been a little child always. You are good then. You are never selfish. You like every one to have everything, but when you are grown up there are some things you like to have all to yourself. You don't like any one else to have any of them." "Yes," said Waldo sleepily, and she did not speak again. When they reached the farmhouse, all was dark, for Lyndall had retired as soon as they got home. Waldo lifted Em from the saddle, and for a moment she leaned her head on his shoulder and clung to him. "You are very tired," he said as he walked with her to the door. "Let me go in and light a candle for you." "No, thank you; it is all right," she said. "Good night, Waldo, dear." But when she went in she sat long alone in the dark.

CHAPTER XX.

WALDO GOES OUT TO TASTE LIFE, AND EM STAYS AT HOME AND TASTES IT. At 9 o'clock in the evening, packing his bundles for the next morning's start, Waldo looked up and was surprised to see Em's yellow head peeping in at his door. It was many a month since she had been there. She said she had made him sandwiches for his journey, and she staid awhile to help him put his goods into the saddle-bags. "You can leave the old things lying about," she said. "I will lock the room and keep it waiting for you to come back some day." To come back some day! Would the bird ever return to its cage? But he thanked her. When she went away, he stood on the doorstep holding the candle till she had almost reached the house. But Em was that evening in no hurry to enter and, instead of going in at the back door, walked with lagging footsteps round the low brick wall that ran before the house. Opposite the open window of the parlor she stopped. The little room, kept carefully closed in Tani' Sannie's time, was well lighted by a paraffin lamp; books and work lay strewn about it, and it wore a bright, habitable aspect. Beside the lamp at the table in the corner sat Lyndall, the open letters and papers of the day's post lying scattered before her, while she perused the columns of a newspaper. At the center table, with his arms folded on an open paper, which there was not light enough to read, sat Gregory. He was looking at her. The light from the open window fell on Em's face under its white "kapje" as she looked in, but no one glanced that way. "Go and fetch me a glass of water," Lyndall said at last.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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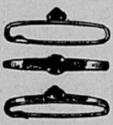
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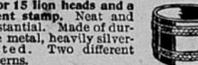
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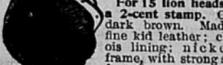
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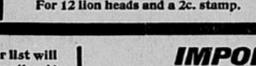
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