

Love's Pilgrimage

Upton Sinclair

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LOVE'S PILGRIMAGE

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A NOVEL

Upton Sinclair

NEW YORK AND LONDON

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LOVE'S PILGRIMAGE

PART I

Loves Entanglement

BOOK I

THE VICTIM

It was in a little woodland glen, with a streamlet tumbling through it. She sat with her back to a snowy birch-tree, gazing into the eddies of a pool below; and he lay beside her, upon the soft, mossy ground, reading out of a book of poems. Images of joy were passing before them; and there came four lines with a picture--

"Hard by, a cottage-chimney smokes,
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis, met,
Are at their savory dinner set."

"Ah!" said she. "I always loved that. Let us be Corydon and Thyrsis!"

He smiled. "They were both of them men," he said.

"Let us change it," she responded--"just between ourselves!"

"Very well--Corydon!" said he.

Then, after a moment's thought, she added, "But we didn't have the cottage."

"No," said he--"nor even the dinner!"

Section 1. It was the Highway of Lost Men. They shivered, and drew their shoulders together as they walked, for it was night, and a cold, sleety rain was falling. The lights from saloons and pawn-shops fell upon their faces--faces haggard and gaunt with misery, or bloated with disease and sin. Some stared before them fixedly; some gazed about with furtive and hungry eyes as they shuffled on. Here and there a policeman stood in the shelter, swinging his club and watching them as they passed. Music called to them from dives and dance-halls, and lighted signs and flaring-colored pictures tempted them in the entrances of cheap museums and theatres; they lingered before these, glad of even a moment's shelter. Overhead the elevated trains pounded by; and from the windows one could see men crowded about the stoves in the rooms of lodging-houses, where the steam from their garments made a blur in the air.

Down this highway walked a lad, about fifteen years of age, pale of face, and with delicate and sensitive features. His overcoat was buttoned tightly about his neck, and his hands thrust into his pockets; he gazed around him swiftly as he walked. He came to this place every now and then, but he never grew used to what he saw.

He eyed the men who passed him; and when he came to a saloon he would push open the door and gaze about. Sometimes he would enter, and hurry through, to peer into the compartments in the back; and then go out again, giving a wide berth to the drinkers, and shrinking from their glances. Once a girl appeared in a doorway, and smiled and nodded to him; he started and hurried out, shuddering. Her wanton black eyes haunted him, hinting unimaginable things.

Then, on a corner, he stopped and spoke to a policeman. "Hello!"

said the man, and shook his head--"No, not this time." So the boy went on; there were several miles of this Highway, and each block of it the same.

At last, in a dingy bar-room, with saw-dust strewn upon the floor, and the odor of stale beer and tobacco-smoke in the air--here suddenly the boy sprang forward, with a cry: "Father!" And a man who sat with bowed head in a corner gave a start, and lifted a white face and stared at him. He rose unsteadily to his feet, and staggered to the other, and fell upon his shoulder, sobbing, "My son! My son!"

How many times had Thyrsis heard those words--in how many hours of anguish! They sank into the deeps of him, waking echoes like the clang of a bell: they voiced all the terror and grief of defeated life--"My son! My son!"

The man clung to him, weeping, and pouring out the flood of his shame. "I have fallen again--I am lost--I am lost!"

The occupants of the place were watching the scene with dull curiosity; and the boy was trembling like a wild deer trapped.

"Yes, father, yes! Let us go home."

"Home--home, my son? Will you take me home? Oh, I couldn't bear to go!"

"But you must come home."

"Do you mean that you still love me, son?"

"Yes, father, I still love you. I want to try to help you. Come with me."

Then the boy would gaze about and ask, "Where is your hat?"

"Hat, my son? I don't know. I have lost it." The boy would see his torn and mud-stained clothing, and the poor old pitiful face, with the eyes blood-shot and swollen, and the skin, that had been rosy, and was now a ghastly, ashen gray. He would choke back his feelings, and grip his hands to keep himself together.

"Come, father, take my hat, and let us go."

"No, my son. I don't need any hat. Nothing can hurt me--I am lost! Lost!"

So they would go out, arm in arm; and while they made their progress up the Highway, the man would pour out his remorse, and tell the story of his weeks of horror.

Then, after a mile or so, he would halt.

"My son!"

"What is it, father?"

"I must stop here, son."

"Why, father?"

"I must have something to drink."

"_No_, father!"

"But, my boy, I can't go on! I can't walk! You don't know what I'm suffering!"

"No, father!"

"I've got the money left--I'm not asking you. I'll come right with you--on my word of honor I will!"

And so they would fight it out--all the way back to the lodging-house where they lived, and where the mother sat and wept. And here they would put him to bed, and lock up his clothing to keep him in; and here, with drugs and mineral-waters, and perhaps a doctor to help, they would struggle with him, and tend him until he was on his feet again. Then, with clothing newly-brushed and face newly-shaven he would go back to the world of men; and the boy would go back to his dreams.

Section 2. Such was the life of Thyrsis, from earliest childhood to maturity. His father's was a heritage of gentle breeding and high traditions--his forefathers were cavaliers, and had served the State. And now it had come to this--to hall bedrooms in lodging-houses, and a life-and-death grapple with destruction! And when Thyrsis came to study the problem, he found that it was a struggle without hope; his father was a man in a trap.

He was what people called a "drummer". He was dependent for his living upon the favor of certain merchants--men for the most part of low ideals, who came to the city in search of their low pleasures. One met them by waiting about in the lobbies of hotels, and in the bar-rooms which they frequented; and always the first sign of fellowship with them was to have a drink. And this was the field on which the battle had to be fought!

He would hold out for months--half a year, perhaps--drinking lemonade and putting up with their raillery. And then he would begin with ginger-ale; and then it would come to beer; and then to whiskey. He was always devising new plans to control himself; always persuading himself that he had solved the problem. He would not drink in the morning; he would not drink until after dinner; he would not drink alone--and so on without end. His whole life was drink, and all his thoughts were of drink--the odor of it always in his nostrils, the image of it always before his eyes.

And the grimness of his fate lay here--that it was by his best qualities that he was betrayed. If he had been hard and mercenary, like some of those who preyed upon him, there might have been hope. But he was generous and free-hearted, a slave to his impulses of friendship. And this was what made the struggle such a cruel one to Thyrsis; it was like the sight of some noble animal basely snared.

From his earliest days the boy had watched these forces working themselves out. The gentleman and the "drummer" fought for

supremacy, and step by step the soul of the man was fashioned to the work he did. To succeed with his customers he must share their ideas and their tastes; and so he was bitter against reformers, who interfered with the gaieties of the city, with no consideration for the tastes of "buyers." But then, on the other hand, would come a time of renunciation, when he would be all enthusiasm for temperance.

He was full of old-fashioned ideas, which would take the quaintest turns of reactionism; his politics were summed up in the phrase that he "would rather vote for a nigger than a Republican"; but then, in the same breath, he would announce some fine and noble sentiment, out of the traditions of a forgotten past. He was the soul of courtesy to women, and of loyalty to friends. He worshipped General Lee and the old time "Virginia gentleman"; and those with whom he lived, and for whose unclean profits he sold himself, never guessed the depths of his contempt for all they stood for. They had the dollars, they were on top; but some day the nemesis of Good-breeding would smite them--the army of the ghosts of Gentility would rise, and with "Marse Robert" and "Jeb" Stuart at their head, would sweep away the hordes of commercialdom.

Thyrsis saw a great deal of this forgotten chivalry. His nursery had been haunted by such musty phantoms; and when he first came to the Northern city, he stayed at a hotel which was frequented by people who lived in this past--old ladies who were proud and prim, and old gentlemen who were quixotic and humorous, young ladies who were "belles," and young gentlemen who aspired to be "blades". It was a world that would have made happy the soul of any writer of romances; but to Thyrsis in earliest childhood the fates had given the gift of seeing beneath the shams of things, and to him this dead Aristocracy cried out loudly for burial. There was an incredible amount of drunkenness, and of debauchery scarcely hidden; there was pretense strutting like a peacock, and avarice skulking like a hound; there were jealousy, and base snobbery, and raging spite, and a breath of suspicion and scandal hanging like a poisonous cloud over everything. These people came and went, an endless procession of them; they laughed and danced and gossiped and drank their way through the boy's life, and unconsciously he judged them, and hated them and feared them. It was not by such that his destiny was to be shaped.

Most of them were poor; not an honest poverty, but a sham and artificial poverty--the inability to dress as others did, and to lose money at "bridge" and "poker", and to pay the costs of their self-indulgences. As for Thyrsis and his parents, they always paid what they owed; but they were not always able to pay it when they owed it, and they suffered all the agonies and humiliations of those who did not pay at all. There was scarcely ever a week when this canker of want did not gnaw at them; their life was one endless and sordid struggle to make last year's clothing look like new, and to find some boarding-house that was cheaper and yet respectable. There was endless wrangling and strife and worry over money; and every year the task was harder, the standards lower, the case more hopeless.

There were rich relatives, a world of real luxury up above--the thing that called itself "Society". And Thyrsis was a student and a bright lad, and he was welcome there; he might have spread his wings

and flown away from this sordidness. But duty held him, and love and memory held him still tighter. For his father worshipped him, and craved his help; to the last hour of his dreadful battle, he fought to keep his son's regard--he prayed for it, with tears in his eyes and anguish in his voice. And so the boy had to stand by. And that meant that he grew up in a torture-house, he drank a cup of poison to its bitter dregs. To others his father was merely a gross little man, with sordid ideas and low tastes; but to Thyrsis he was a man with the terror of the hunted creatures in his soul, and the furies of madness cracking their whips about his ears.

There was only one ending possible--it worked itself out with the remorseless precision of a machine. The soul that fought was smothered and stifled, its voice grew fainter and feebler; the agony and the shame grew hotter, the suffering more cruel, the despair more black. Until at last they found him in a delirium, and took him to a private hospital; and thither went Thyrsis, now grown to be a man, and sat in a dingy reception-room, and a dingy doctor came to him and said, "Do you wish to see the body?" And Thyrsis answered, in a low voice, "No."

Section 3. So it was that the soul of this lad had grown sombre, and taken to brooding upon the mysteries of fate. Life was no jest and no holiday, it was no place for shams and self-deceptions. It was a place where cruel enemies set traps for the unwary; a field where blind and merciless forces ranged, unhindered by man or God.

Thyrsis could not have told how soon in life this sense had come to him. In his earliest childhood he had known that his father was preyed upon, just as certainly as any wild thing in the forest. At first the enemies had been saloon-keepers, and wicked men who tempted him to drink with them. The names of these men were household words to him, portents of terror; they peopled his imagination as epic figures, such as Black Douglas must have been to the children of the Northern Border.

But then, with widening intelligence, it became certain social forces, at first dimly apprehended. It was the god of "business"--before which all things fair and noble went down. It was "business" that kept vice triumphant in the city; it was because of "business" that the saloons could not be closed even on Sunday, so that the father might be at home one day in seven. And was it not in search of "business" that he was driven forth to loaf in hotel-lobbies and bar-rooms?

Who was to blame for this, Thyrsis did not know; but certain men made profit of it--and these, too, were ignoble men. He knew this; for now and then his father's employers would honor the little family with some kind of an invitation, and they would have to swallow their pride and go. So Thyrsis grew up, with the sense of a great evil loose in the world; a wrong, of which the world did not know. And within him grew a passionate longing to cry aloud to others, to open their eyes to this truth!

Outwardly he was like other boys, eager and cheerful, even boisterous; but within was this hidden thing, which brooded and questioned. Life had made him into an ascetic. He must be stern, even merciless, with himself--because of the fear that was in him, and in his mother as well. The fear that self-indulgence might lay its grisly paws upon him! The fear that he, too, might fall into the

trap!

It was not merely that he never touched stimulants; he had an instinct against all things that were softening and enervating, all things that tempted and enslaved. For him was the morning-air, and the shock of cold water, and the hardness of the wild things of the open. Other people did not feel this way; other people pampered themselves and defiled themselves--and so Thyrsis went apart. He lived quite alone with his thoughts, he had never a chum, scarcely even any friends. Where in the long procession of lodging and boarding-houses and summer-resorts should he meet people who knew what he knew about life? Where in all the world should he meet them, save in the books of great men in times past?

There was not much of what is called "culture" in his family; no music at all, and no poetry. But there were novels, and there were libraries where one could get more of these, so Thyrsis became a devourer of stories; he would disappear, and they would find him at meal-times, hidden in a clump of bushes, or in a corner behind a sofa--anywhere out of the world. He read whole libraries of adventure: Mayne-Reid and Henty, and then Cooper and Stevenson and Scott. And then came more serious novels--"Don Quixote" and "Les Miserables," George Eliot, whom he loved, and Dickens, whose social protest thrilled him; and chiefest of all Thackeray, who moulded his thought. Thackeray knew the world that he knew, Thackeray saw to the heart of it; and no high-souled lad who had read him and worshipped him was ever after to be lured by the glamor of the "great" world--a world whose greatness was based upon selfishness and greed.

Thyrsis knew no foreign language, and fate or instinct kept him from those writers who jested with uncleanness; so he was virginal, and pure in all his imaginings. Other lads exchanged confidences in forbidden things, they broke down the barriers and tore away the veils; but Thyrsis had never breathed a word about matters of sex to any living creature. He pondered and guessed, but no one knew his thoughts; and this was a crucial thing, the secret of much of his aloofness.

Section 4. In one of the early boarding-houses there had been a little girl, and the families had become intimate. But the two children disliked each other, and kept apart all they could. Thyrsis was domineering and imperious, and things must always be his way. He was given to rebellion, whereas Corydon was gentle and meek, and submitted to confinements and prohibitions in a quite disgraceful manner. She was a pretty little girl, with great black eyes; and because she was silent and shy, he set her down as "stupid", and went his way.

They spent a summer in the country together, where Thyrsis possessed himself of a sling-shot, and took to collecting the skins of squirrels and chipmunks. Corydon was horrified at this; and by way of helping her to overcome her squeamishness he would make her carry home the bleeding corpses. He took to raising, young birds, also, and soon had quite an aviary--two robins, and a crow, and a survivor from a brood of "cherry-birds." The feeding of these nestlings was no small task, but Thyrsis went fishing when the spirit moved him, secure in the certainty that the calls of the hungry creatures would keep Corydon at home.

This was the way of it, until Corydon began to blossom into a young lady, beautiful and tenderly-fashioned. Thyrsis still saw her now and then, and he made attempts to share his higher joys with her. He had become a lover of poetry; once they walked by the seashore, and he read her "Alexander's Feast", thrilling with delight in its resounding phrases:

"Break his bands of sleep asunder,
And rouse him like a rattling peal of thunder!"

But Corydon had never heard of Timotheus, and she had not been taught to exploit her emotions. She could only say that she did not understand it very well.

And then, on another occasion, Thyrsis endeavored to tell her about Berkeley, whom he had been reading. But Corydon did not take to the sensational philosophy either; she would come back again and again to the evasion of old Dr. Johnson--"When I kick a stone, I know the stone is there!"

This girl was like a beautiful flower, Thyrsis told himself--like all the flowers that had gone before her, and all those that would come after, from generation to generation. She fitted so perfectly into her environment, she grew so calmly and serenely; she wore pretty dresses, and helped to serve tea, and was graceful and sweet--and with never an idea that there was anything in life beyond these things. So Thyrsis pondered as he went his way, complacent over his own perspicacity; and got not even a whiff of smoke from the volcano of rebellion and misery that was seething deep down in her soul!

The choosers of the unborn souls had played a strange fantasy here; they had stolen one of the daughters of ancient Greece, and set her down in this metropolis of commercialism. For Corydon might have been Nausikaa herself; she might have marched in the Panathenaic procession, with one of the sacred vessels in her hands; she might have run in the Attic games, bare-limbed and fearless. Hers was a soul that leaped to the call of joy, that thrilled at the faintest touch of beauty. Above all else, she was born for music--she could have sung so that the world would have remembered it. And she was pent in a dingy boarding-house, with no point of contact with anything about her--with no human soul to whom she could whisper her despair!

They sent her to a public-school, where the sad-eyed drudges of the traders came to be drilled for their tasks. They harrowed her with arithmetic and grammar, which she abhorred; they taught her patriotic songs, about a country to which she did not belong. And also, they sent her to Sunday-school, which was worse yet. She had the strangest, instinctive hatred of their religion, with all that it stood for. The sight of a clergyman with his vestments and his benedictions would make her fairly bristle with hostility. They talked to her about her sins, and she did not know what they meant; they pried into the state of her soul, and she shrunk from them as if they had been hairy spiders. Here, too, they taught her to sing--droning hymns that were a mockery of all the joys of life.

So Corydon devoured her own heart in secret; and in time a dreadful thing came to happen--the stagnant soul beginning to fester. One day

the girl, whose heart was the quintessence of all innocence, happened to see a low word scribbled upon a fence. And now--they had urged her to discover sins, and she discovered them. Suppose that word were to stay in her mind and haunt her--suppose that she were not able to forget it, try as she would! And of course she tried; and the more she tried, the less she succeeded; and so came the discovery that she was a lost soul and a creature of depravity! The thought occurred to her, that she might go on to think of other words, and to think of images and actions as well; she might be unable to forget any of them--her mind might become a storehouse of such horrors! And so the maiden out of ancient Greece would lie awake all night and wrestle with fiends, until she was bathed in a perspiration.

Section 5. About this time Thyrsis was making his debut as an author. He had discovered a curious knack in himself, a turn for making verses of a sort which were pleasing to children. They came from some little corner of his consciousness, he scarcely knew how; but there was a paper that was willing to buy them, and to pay him the princely sum of five dollars a week! This would pay for his food and his hall bedroom, or for board at some farm in the summer; and so for several years Thyrsis was free.

He told a falsehood about his age, and entered college, and buried himself up to the eyes in work. This was a college in a city, and a poor college, where the students all lived at home, and had nothing to do but study; and so Thyrsis missed all that beneficent illumination known as "student-life." He never hurraed at foot-ball contests, nor did he dress himself in honorific garments, nor stupify himself at "smokers." Being democratic, and without thought of setting himself up over others, he was unaware of his greatest opportunities, and when they invited him into a fraternity, he declined. Once or twice he found himself roaming the streets at night with a crowd of students, emitting barbaric screechings; but this made him feel silly, and so he lagged behind and went home.

The college served its purpose, in introducing him to the world of knowledge; but that did not take long, and afterwards it was all in his way. The mathematics were a discipline, and in them he rejoiced as a strong man to run a race; and this was true also of the sciences, and of history--the only trouble was that he would finish the text-books in the first few weeks, and after that there was nothing to do save to compose verses in class, and to make sketches of the professors. But as for the "languages" and the "literatures" they taught him--in the end Thyrsis came to forgive them, because he saw that they did not know what languages and literatures were. On this account he took to begging leave of absence on grounds of his poverty; and then he would go home and spend his days and nights in learning.

One could get so much for so little, in this wonderful world of mind! For eight cents he picked up a paper volume of Emerson's "Essays"; and in this shrewd and practical nobility was so much that he was seeking in life! And then he stumbled upon a fifteen-cent edition of "Sartor Resartus", and took that home and read it. It was like the clash of trumpets and cymbals to him; it made his whole being leap. Hour after hour he read, breathless, like a man bewitched, the whole night through. He would cry aloud with delight, or drop the book and pound his knee and laugh over the demoniac

power of it. The next day he began the "French Revolution"; and after that, alas, he found there was no more--for Carlyle had turned his back upon democracy, and so Thyrasis turned his back upon Carlyle.

For this was one of the forces which had had to do with the shaping of his thought. Beginning in the public-schools he had learned about his country--the country which was his, if not Corydon's. He had read in its history--Irving's "Life of Washington," and ten great volumes about Lincoln; so he had come to understand that salvation is of the people, and that those things which the people do not do--those things have not yet been done. So no one could deceive him, or lead him astray; he might laugh with the Tories, and even love them for their foibles--quaint old Samuel Johnson, for instance, because he was poor and sturdy, and had stood by his trade of bookman; but at bottom Thyrasis knew that all these men were gilding a corpse. Wordsworth and Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne--he followed each one as far as their revolutionary impulse lasted; and after that there was no more in them for him. Even Ruskin, who taught him the possibilities of English prose, and opened his eyes to the form and color of the world of nature--even Ruskin he gave up, because he was a philanthropist and not a democrat.

Thyrasis had been brought up as a devout Episcopalian. They had dressed him in scarlet and white to carry the train of the bishop at confirmation, and had sent him to an afternoon service every day throughout Lent. Early in life he had stumbled on a paper copy of Paine's "Age of Reason," and he read it with horror, and then conducted a private *auto da fe*. But the questions of the book stayed with him, and as years passed they clamored more loudly. What would have happened, astronomically, if the sun had stood still? And how many different species would have had to go into the ark? And what was the size of a whale's gullet, and the probable digestive powers of a whale's stomach?

And then came more fundamental difficulties. Could there, after all, be such a duty as faith in any intellectual matter? Could there be any revelation superior to reason--must not reason have once decided that it was a revelation, or was not? And what of all the other "revelations", which all the other peoples of the world accepted? And then again, if Jesus had been God, could he really have been tempted? To be God and man at the same time--did that not mean both to know and not to know? And was there any way conceivable for anything to be God, in which everything else was not God?

These perplexities and many others the boy took to his clerical adviser, a man who loved him dearly, and who gave him some volumes of the "Bampton lectures" to read. Here was the defense of Christianity, conducted by authorities, and with scholarship and dignity; and Thyrasis found to his dismay that the only convincing parts of their books were where they gave a *resume* of the arguments of their opponents. He learned in this way many difficulties that had not yet occurred to him; and when he had got through with the reading his mind was made up. If any man were to be damned for not believing such things, then it was his duty as a thinker to be damned; and so he bade farewell to the Church--something which was sad, in a way, for his mother had been planning him for a bishop!

Section 6. But Thyrsis was throwing away many chances these days. He went into the higher regions to spend his Christmas holidays; and instead of being tactful and agreeable, he buried himself in a corner of the library all day long. For Thyrsis had made the greatest discovery yet--he had found out Shakespeare! At school they had taught him "English" by means of "to be or not to be", and they had sought to trap him at examinations by means of "man's first disobedience and the fruit"; and so for years they had held him back from the two great glories of our literature. But now, by accident, he stumbled into "The Tempest"; and after that he read every line of the plays in two weeks.

He lost his soul in that wonderland; he walked and thought no more like the men of earth--he dwelt with those lords and princes of the soul, and learned to speak their language. He would dodge among cable-cars and trucks with their heavenly melodies in his ears; and while he sung them his eyes flashed and his heart beat fast:

**"Good night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!"**

There were a few days left in those wondrous holidays; and these went to Milton. There was a set of his works, enormously expensive, which had been made and purchased with no idea that any human being would ever read them. But Thyrsis read them, and so all the beauty of the binding was justified. For hours, and hours upon hours, he drank in that thunderous music, crying it aloud with his hands clenched tightly, and stopping to laugh like a child with excitement:

**"Th'imperial ensign, which full high advanced,
Shone like a meteor streaming to the wind,
With gems and golden lustre rich emblazed,
Seraphic arms and trophies; all the while
Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds!"**

And afterwards, when he came to the palace that "rose like an exhalation", all of Thyrsis' soul rose with it. One summer's day he stood on a high mountain with a railroad in the valley, and saw a great freight-engine stop still and pour out its masses of dense black smoke. It rose in the breathless air, straight as a column, high and majestic; and Thyrsis thought of that line. It carried him out into the heavens, and he knew that a flash of poetry such as that is the meeting of man's groping hand with God's.

It was about here that a strange adventure came to him. It was midwinter, and he went out, long after midnight, to walk in a beautiful garden. A dry powdery snow crunched beneath his feet, and overhead the stars gleamed and quivered, so bright that he felt like stretching out his hands to them. The world lay still, and awful in its beauty; and here suddenly, unsuspected--unheralded, and quite unsought--there came to Thyrsis a strange and portentous experience, the first of his ecstasies.

He could not have told whether he walked or sat down, whether he spoke or was silent; he lost all sense of his own existence--his consciousness was given up to the people of his dreams, the companions and lovers of his fancy. The cold and snow were gone, and there was a moonlit glade in a forest; and thither they came, one by

one, friendly and human, yet in the full panoply of their splendor and grace. There were Shelley and Milton, and the gentle and troubled Hamlet, and the sorrowful knight of la Mancha, with the irrepressible Falstaff to hearten them all; a strangely-assorted company, yet royal spirits all of them, and no strangers to each other in their own world. And here they gathered and conversed, each in his own vein and from his own impulse, with gracious fancy and lofty vision and heart-easing mirth. And ah, how many miles would one have travelled to be with them!

That was the burden which this gift laid upon Thyrsis. He soon discovered that these visions of wonder came but once, and that when they were gone, they were gone forever. And he must learn to grapple with them as they fled, to labor with them and to hold them fast, at the cost of whatever heartbreaking strain. Thus alone could men have even the feeblest reflexion of their beauty--upon which to feed their souls forever after.

Section 7. These things came at the same time as another development in Thyrsis' life, likewise portentous and unexpected. Boyhood was gone, and manhood had come. There was a bodily change taking place in him--he became aware of it with a start, and with the strangest and most uncomfortable thrills. He did not know what to make of it, or what to do about it; nor did he know where to turn for advice.

He tried to put it aside, as a thing of no importance. But it would not be put aside--it was of vast importance. He discovered new desires in himself, impulses that dominated him in a most disturbing way. He found that he took a new interest in women and young girls; he wanted to linger near them, and their glances caused him strange emotions. He resented this, as an invasion of his privacy; it was inconsistent with his hermit-instinct. Thyrsis wished no women in his life save the muses with their star-sewn garments. He had been fond of a line from a sonnet to Milton:

"Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart."

But instead of this, what awful humiliations! In a summer-resort where he found himself, there was a girl of not very gentle breeding, somewhat pudgy and with a languishing air. She liked to have boys snuggle down by her; and so Thyrsis spent the whole of one evening, sitting in a summer-house with an arm about her waist, dissolved in a sort of moon-calf sentimentalism. And then he passed the rest of the night wandering about in the forest cursing himself, with tears of shame and vexation in his eyes.

He was so ignorant about these matters that he did not even know if the changes that had taken place in him were normal, or whether they were doing him harm. He made up his mind that he must have advice; as it was unthinkable that he should speak about such shameful things with any grown person, he bethought himself of a classmate in college who was an earnest and sober man. This friend, much older than Thyrsis, was the son of an evangelical clergyman, and was headed for the ministry himself. His name was Warner, and Thyrsis had helped him in arranging for some religious meetings at the college. Warner had been shocked by his theological irregularities; but they were still friends, and now Thyrsis sought a chance to exchange confidences with him.

The opportunity came while they were strolling down an avenue near the college, and a woman passed them, a woman with bold and hard features, and obviously-painted cheeks. She smiled at a group of students just ahead, and one of them turned and walked off arm in arm with her.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Warner. "Did you see that?"

"Yes," said Thyrsis. "Who is she?"

"She comes from a house just around the corner."

"But who is she?"

"Why--she's a street-walker."

"A street-walker!"

This brought to Thyrsis' mind a problem that had been haunting him for a year or two. Always when he walked about the streets at night there were women who smiled at him and whispered. And he knew that these were bad women, and shrunk from them. But just what did they mean?

"What does she do?" he asked again.

"Why, don't you know what a street-walker is?"

"Not very well," said Thyrsis.

It took some time for him to get the desired information, because the other could not realize the depths of his ignorance. "They sell themselves to men," he said.

"But what for?" asked Thyrsis. "You don't mean that they--they let them---"

"They have intercourse together. Of course."

Thyrsis was almost dumb with dismay. "But I should think they would have children!" he exclaimed.

"Good Lord, man!" laughed the other. "Where do you keep yourself, anyway?"

But Thyrsis was too much shaken to think of being ashamed. This was a most appalling revelation to him--it opened quite a new vista of life's possibilities.

"But why should they do such things?" he cried.

"They earn their living that way," said the other.

"But why _that_ way?"

"I don't know. They are that kind of women, I suppose."

And so Warner went on to expound to him the facts of prostitution, and all the abysses of human depravity that lie thereabouts. And

incidentally the boy got a chance to ask his questions, and to get a common-sense view of his perplexities. Also he got some understanding of human nature, and of the world in which he lived.

Here was Warner, a man of twenty-four, and of a devout, if somewhat dull and plodding conscientiousness; and the last eight or nine years of his' life had been one torment because of the cravings of lust. He had never committed an act of unchastity--or at least he told Thyrsis that he had not. But he was never free from the impulse, and he had no conception of the possibility of being free. His desire was a purely brute one--untouched by any intellectual or spiritual, or even any sentimental color. He desired woman, as woman--it mattered not what woman. How low his impulses took him Thyrsis realized with a shudder from one remark that he made--that his poverty did not help him to live virtuously, for about the docks and in the workingmen's quarters there were women who would sell themselves for fifty cents a night.

This man's whole life was determined by that craving; in fact it seemed to Thyrsis that his God had made the universe with relation to it--a heaven to reward him if he abstained, and a hell to punish him if he yielded. It was because of this that he clung to the church, and shrunk from any dallying with "rationalism". He disapproved of the theatre, because it appealed to these cravings; he disapproved of all pictures and statues of the nude human form, because the sight of them overmastered him. For the same reason he shrunk from all impassioned poetry, and from dancing, and even from non-religious music. He was rigid in his conformance to all the social conventions, because they served the purpose of saving him and his young women-friends from temptation; and he looked forward to the completion of a divinity-course as his goal, because then he would be able to settle down and marry, and so at last to gratify his desires. He stated this quite baldly, quoting the authority of St. Paul, that it was "better to marry than to burn."

This conversation brought Thyrsis to a realization that there was a great deal in the world that was not found in the poetry of Tennyson and Longfellow; and so he began to pry into the souls of others of his fellow-students.

Section 8. Warner had given him the religious attitude; and now he went after the scientific. There was a tall, eager-faced young man, who proclaimed himself a disciple of Haeckel and Herbert Spencer, and even went so far as to quote Schopenhauer in class. Walking home together one day, these two fell to arguing the freedom of the will, and the nature of motives and desires, and what power one has over them; and so Thyrsis made the startling discovery that this young man, having accepted the doctrine of "determinism," had drawn therefrom the corollary that he had to do what he wanted to do, and so was powerless to resist his sex-impulses. For the past year this youth, a fine, intellectual and honest student, had gone at regular intervals to visit a prostitute; and with entirely scientific and cold-blooded precision he outlined to Thyrsis the means he took to avoid contracting disease. Thyrsis listened, feeling as he might have felt in a slaughter-house; and when, returning to the deterministic hypothesis, he asked how it was that he had managed to escape this "necessity", he was told that it must be because he was of a weaker and less manly constitution.

And there was yet another type: a man with whom there was no difficulty in bringing up the subject, for the reason that he was always bringing it up himself. Thyrsis sat next to him in a class in Latin, and noticed that whenever the text contained any hint at matters of sex--which was not infrequent in Juvenal and Horace--this man would look at him with a grin and a sly wink. And sometimes Thyrsis would make a casual remark in conversation, and the man would twist it out of its meaning, or make a pun out of it--to find some excuse for his satyr's leer. So at last Thyrsis was moved to say to him--"Don't you ever realize what a state you've got your mind into?"

"How do you mean?" asked the man.

"Why, everything in the world seems to suggest obscenity to you. You're always looking for it and always finding it--you don't seem to care about anything else."

The other was interested in that view of it, and he acknowledged with mild amusement that it was true; apparently it was a novelty to him to discuss such matters seriously. He told Thyrsis that he could not remember having ever restrained a sexual impulse in his life. He thought of lust in connection with every woman he met, and his mind was a storehouse of smut. And yet he was not a bad fellow, in other ways; he handsome, and a good deal of an athlete, and was planning to be a physician. "You'll find most all the fellows are the same," he said.

Not long after this, Thyrsis was selected to represent his college on a debating-team, and he went away to another city and was invited to a fraternity-house; and here, suddenly, he discovered how much of "college-life" he had been missing. This was a fashionable university, and he met the sons of wealthy parents. About a score of them lived in this fraternity-house, without any sort of supervision or restraint. They ate in a beautiful oak-panelled dining-room adorned with drinking-steins; and throughout the meal they treated their visitor to such an orgy of obscenity as he had never dreamed of in his life before. Thyrsis was trapped and could not get away; and it seemed to him when he rose from the table that there was nothing left clean in all God's universe. These boys appeared to vie with each other in blasphemous abandonment; and it was not simply wantonness--it was sprawling and disgusting filthiness.

One of this group took Thyrsis driving, and was led to talk. Here was a youth whose father was the president of a great manufacturing-enterprise, and supplied him with unlimited funds; which money the boy used to divert himself in the pursuit of young women. Sometimes he had stooped so low as manicure-girls and shop-clerks and stenographers; but for the most part he sought actresses and chorus-girls--they had more intelligence and spirit, he explained, they were harder to win. He had his way with them, partly because he was handsome and clever, but mainly because he was the keeper of the keys of opportunity. It was his to dispense auto-rides and champagne-suppers, and flowers and jewels, and all things else that were desirable in life.

Thyrsis was appalled at the hardness and the utter ruthlessness of this man--he saw him as a young savage turned loose to prey in a civilized community. He had the most supreme contempt for his victims--that was what they were made for, and he paid them their

price. Nor was this just because they were women, it was a matter of class; the young man had a mother and sisters, to whom he applied quite other standards. But Thyrsis found himself wondering how long, with this contagion raging among the fathers and the sons, it would be possible to keep the mothers and the daughters sterilized.

Section 9. These discoveries came one by one; but Thyrsis saw enough at the outset to make it clear that the time had come for him to gird up his loins. The choice of Hercules was before him; and he did not intend that the course of his life was to be decided by these cravings of the animal within him.

From the grosser sorts of temptation he was always saved by the fastidiousness of his temperament; the thought of a woman who sold herself for money could never bring him anything but shuddering. But all about his lodging-house lived the daughters of the poor, and these were a snare for his feet. It seemed to him as if this craving came to a man in regular pulses; he could go for weeks, serene and happy in his work--and then suddenly would come the restlessness, and he would go out into the night and wander about the streets for hours, impelled by a futile yearning for he knew not what--the hope of something clean in the midst of uncleanness, of some adventure that would be not quite shameful to a poet's fancy. And then, after midnight, he would steal home, baffled and sick at heart, and wet his pillow with hot and bitter tears!

So unbearable to him was the thought of such perils that he was impelled to seek his old friend the clergyman, who had lost him over the ancient Hebrew mythologies, and now won him back by his living moral force. With much embarrassment and stammering Thyrsis managed to give a hint of what troubled him; and the man, whose life was made wholly of love for others, opened his great heart and took Thyrsis in.

He told him of his own youthful struggle--a struggle which had resulted in victory, for he had never known a woman. And he put all the facts before the boy, made clear to him the all-determining importance of the issue:

"Choose well, your choice is
Brief and yet endless!"

On the one hand was slavery and degradation and disease; and on the other were all the heights of the human spirit. For if one saved and stored this mighty sex-energy, it became transmuted to the gold of intellectual and emotional power. Such was the universal testimony of the masters of the higher life--

"My strength is as the strength of ten
Because my heart is pure."

And this was no blind asceticism; it was simply a choosing of the best. It was not a denial of love, but on the contrary a consecration of love. Some day Thyrsis would meet the woman he was to cleave to, and he would expect her to come to him a virgin; and he must honor her as much--he must save the fire and fervor of his young desire for his life's great consummation.

Such was the ideal; and these two men made a compact between them,

that once every month Thyrsis would write and tell of his success or failure. And this amateur confessional was a mighty motive to the lad--he knew that he could never tell a lie, and the thought of telling the truth was like a sword hanging over him. There were hours of trial, when he stood so close to the edge of the precipice that this alone was what kept him clear.

Section 10. The summer had come, and Thyrsis had gone away to live in a country village, and was reading Keats and Shelley, and the narrative poems of Scott. There came a soft warm evening, when all the world seemed a-dream; and he had been working hard, and there came to him a yearning for the stars. He went out, and was strolling through the streets of the village, when he saw a girl come out of one of the houses. She was younger than he, graceful of form, and pretty. The lamp-light flashed on her bright cheeks, and she smiled at him as she passed. And Thyrsis' heart gave a great leap, and the blood surged to his face; he turned and looked, and saw that she was gazing over her shoulder at him.

He stopped, and turned to follow, his meditations all gone, and gone his resolutions. A trembling seized him, and every nerve of him tingled. He could feel his heart as if it were underneath his throat.

In a moment more he was beside the girl. "May I join you?" he asked, and she replied with a nod.

Thyrsis moved beside her and took her arm in his. A moment later they came to a place where the road was dark, and he put his arm about her waist; she made no resistance.

"I--I've seen you often before," she said.

"Yes," he replied, "I have seen you." And he suddenly remembered a remark that he had heard about her. There was a large summer-hotel in this neighborhood, which as usual had brought all the corruptions of the city in its train; and a youth whom Thyrsis had met there had pointed out the girl with the remark, "She's a little beast."

And this idea, as it came to him, swept him away in a fierce tide of madness; he bent suddenly down and whispered into her ear. They were words that never in Thyrsis' life had passed his lips before.

The girl pushed him away; but she laughed.

"You don't mind, do you?" exclaimed Thyrsis, his heart thumping like a hammer.

"Listen," he whispered, bending towards her. "Let us go and take a walk. Let us go where no one will see us."

"Where?" she asked.

"Out into the country," he said.

"Not now," she replied. "Some other time."

"No, now!" exclaimed Thyrsis, desperately. "Now!"

They had been moving slowly; they came to a place where a great tree hung over the road, shadowing it; and there they stopped, as by one impulse.

"Listen to me," he whispered, swiftly. "Listen. You don't know how anxious I have been to meet you. It's true--indeed it's true!"

He paused. "Yes," said the girl, "and I have been wanting to meet you. Didn't you ever see me nod to you?"

And suddenly Thyrsis put his arms about her, and pressed her to him. The touch of her bosom sent the blood driving through his veins in torrents of fire; he no longer knew or cared what he said, or what he did.

"Listen to me," he raved on. "Listen to me! Nobody will know! And you are so beautiful, so beautiful! I love you!" The words burned his lips, but he forced himself to say them, again and again--"I love you!"

The girl was gazing around her nervously. "Not now," she exclaimed. "Not to-night. To-morrow I will meet you, to-morrow night, and go with you."

"No," cried Thyrsis, "not to-morrow night, but now!" And he clasped her yet more tightly, with all his strength. "Listen," he panted, his breath on her cheek. "I love you! I cannot wait till to-morrow-- I could not bear it. I am all on fire! I should not know what to do!"

The girl gazed about her again in uncertainty, and Thyrsis swept on in his swift, half-incoherent exclamations. He would take no refusal; for half his madness was terror of himself, and he knew it. And then suddenly, as he cried out to her, the girl whispered, faintly, "All right!" And his heart gave a throb that hurt him.

"I'll tell you," she went on, hastily, "I was going to the store for something, and they expect me home. But wait here till I get back, and then I'll go with you."

"You mean it?" whispered Thyrsis. "You mean it?"

"Yes, yes," she answered.

"And it will be soon?"

"Yes, soon."

"All right," said he. "But first give me a kiss." As she held up her face, Thyrsis pressed her to him, and kissed her again and again, until her cheeks were aflame. At last he released her, and she turned swiftly and darted up the street.

Section 11. And after she was gone the boy stood there motionless, not stirring even a hand. A full minute passed, and the color went out of his cheeks, and the fire out of his veins, and he could hardly stand erect. His head sunk lower and lower, until suddenly he whispered hoarsely, under his breath, "Oh, my God! Oh, my God!"

He looked up at the sky, his face ghastly white; and there came from his throat a low moan, like that of a wounded animal. Suddenly he turned, and fled away down the street.

He went on and on, block after block; but then, all at once, he stopped again and faced about. He gripped his hands until the nails cut him, and shut his teeth together like a steel-trap. "No, no!" he muttered. "No--you coward!"

He turned and began to march, grimly, as a soldier might; he went back, and stopped on the spot from which he had come; and there he stood, like a statue. So one minute passed, then another; and at last a shadow moved in the distance, and a step came near. It was the girl.

"Here I am," she whispered, laughing.

"Yes," said Thyrsis. "I have something I must say to you, please."

She noticed the change in a flash, and she stopped. "What's the matter?"

"I don't know just how to tell you," said Thyrsis, in a low, quivering voice. "I've been a hound, and now I don't want to be a cad. But I'm sorry for what we were talking about."

"You mean what you were talking about, don't you?" demanded the girl, her eyes flashing.

Thyrsis dropped his glance. "Yes," he said. "I am a cur. I beg your pardon. I am so ashamed of myself that I don't know what to do. But, oh, I was crazy. I couldn't help it! and I--I'm so sorry!" There were tears in his voice.

"Humph," said the girl, "it's all right."

"No," said Thyrsis, "it's all wrong. It's dreadful--it's horrible. I don't know what I should have done---"

"Well, you better not do it any more, that's all," said she. "I'm sure you needn't worry about me--I'll take care of myself."

Thyrsis looked at her again; she was no longer beautiful. Her face was coarse, and her anger did not make it any better. His humility made no impression.

"It is so wrong---" he began; but she interrupted him.

"Preaching won't help it any," she said. "I don't want to hear it. Good-bye."

So she turned and walked away; and Thyrsis stood there, white, and shuddering, until at last he started and strode off. Clear through the town he went, and out into the black country beyond, seeing nothing, caring about nothing. He flung himself down by the roadside, and lay there moaning for hours: "My God, my God, what shall I do?"

Section 12. It was nearly morning when he came back and crept

upstairs to his room; and here he sat by the bedside, gazing at the haggard face in the glass. At such times as this he discovered a something in his features that filled him with shuddering; he discovered it in his words, and in the very tone of his voice--the sins of the fathers were being visited upon the children! What an old, old story it was to him--this anguish and remorse! These ecstasies of resolution that vanished like a cloud-wrack--these protestations and noble sentiments that counted for naught in conduct! And his was to be the whole heritage of impotence and futility; he, too, was to struggle and agonize--and to finish with his foot in the trap!

This idea was like a white-hot goad to him. After such an experience there would be several months of toil and penance, and of savage self-immolation. It was hard to punish a man who had so little; but Thyrsis managed to find ways. For several months at a time he would go without those kinds of food that he liked; and instead of going to bed at one o'clock he would read the New Testament in Greek for an hour. He would leap out of bed in the morning and plunge into cold water; and at night, when he felt a longing upon him, he would go out and run for hours.

He took to keeping diaries and writing exhortations to himself. Because he could no longer use the theological prayers he had been taught, he fashioned new invocations for himself: prayers to the unknown sources of his vision, to the new powers of his own soul--"the undiscovered gods," as he called them. Above all he prayed to his vision of the maiden who waited the issue of this battle, and held the crown of victory in her keeping--

"Somewhere beneath the sun,
Those quivering heart-strings prove it,
Somewhere there must be one
Made for this soul to love it--

Some one whom I could court
With no great change of manner,
Still holding reason's fort,
While waving fancy's banner!"

All of which things made a subtle change in his attitude to Corydon, whom he still met occasionally. Corydon was now a young lady, beautiful, even stately, with an indescribable atmosphere of gentleness and purity about her. All things unclean shrunk from her presence; and so in times of distress he liked to be with her. He would drop vague hints as to sufferings and temptations, and told her that she seemed like a "goddess" to him.

Corydon received this with some awe, but with more perplexity. She could not understand why anyone should struggle so much, or why a youth should take such a sombre view of things. But she was perfectly willing to seem like a "goddess" to anyone, and she was glad if that helped him. She was touched when he read her a poem of his own, a poem which he held very precious. He called it

"A song of the young-eyed Cherubim
In the days of the making of man."

And in it he had set forth the view of life that had come to him--

**"The quest of the spirit's gain--
Lured by the graces of pleasure,
And lashed by the furies of pain.
Thy weakness shall sigh for an Eden,
But the sword shall flame at the gate;
For far is the home of thy vision
And strong is the hand of thy fate!"**

Section 13. Though Thyrsis had no time to realize it, it was in this long and bitter struggle that he won whatever power he had in his future life. It was here that he learned "to hold his will above him as his law", and to defy the world for the sake of his ideal. And then, too, this toil was the key that opened to him the treasure-house of a new art--which was music.

Until he was nearly out of college Thyrsis had scarcely heard any music at all. Church-hymns he had learned, and a few songs in school. But now in poetry and other books he met with references to composers, and to the meaning of great music; and the things that were described there were the things he loved, and he began to feel a great eagerness to get at them. As a first step he bought a mandolin, and set to work to teach himself to play, a task at which he wrought with great diligence. At the same time a friend had bought a guitar, and the two set to work to play duets. The first preliminary was the getting of the instruments in tune; and not knowing that the mandolin is an octave higher than the guitar, they spent a great deal of time and broke a great many guitar-strings.

As the next step, Thyrsis went to hear a great pianist, and sat perplexed and wondering. There was a girl next to him who sobbed, and Thyrsis watched her as he might have watched a house on fire. Only once the pianist pleased _him_--when he played a pretty little piece called somebody's "impromptu", in which he got a gleam of a "tune." Poor Thyrsis went and got that piece, and took it home to study it, with the help of the mandolin; but, alas, in the maze of notes he could not even find the "tune."

But if he could not understand the music, he could read books about it; he read a whole library--criticism of music, analysis of music, histories of music, composers of music; and so gradually he learned the difference between a sarabande and a symphony, and began to get some idea of what he went out for to hear. At first, at the concerts, all he could think of was to crane his neck and recognize the different instruments; he heard whole symphonies, while doing nothing but watching for the "movements," and making sure he hadn't skipped any. One heartless composer ran two movements into one, and so Thyrsis' concert came out one piece short at the end, and he sat gazing about him in consternation when the audience rose to go. Afterwards he read long dissertations about each symphony before he went, and he would note down the important points and watch for them. The critic would expatiate upon "the long-drawn dissonance _forte_, that marks the close of the working-out portion"; and Thyrsis would watch for that long-drawn dissonance, and be wondering if it was never coming--when suddenly the whole symphony would come to an end! Or he would read about a "quaint capering measure led off by the bassoons," or a "frantic sweep of the violins over a trombone melody," and he would watch for these events with eyes and ears alert, and if he found them--_eureka_!

But such things could not last forever; for Thyrsis had a heart full of eagerness and love, and of such is the soul of music. And just then was a time when he was sick and worn--when it seemed to him that the burden of his life was more than he could bear. He was haunted by the thought that he would lose his long battle, that he would go under and go down; and then it was that chance took him to a concert which closed with the great "C-Minor Symphony."

Thyrsis had read a life of Beethoven, and he knew that here was one of the hero-souls--a man who had grappled with the fiends, and passed through the valley of death. And now he read accounts of this titan symphony, and learned that it was a battle of the human spirit with despair. He read Beethoven's words about the opening theme--"So knocks fate upon the door!" And a fierce and overwhelming longing possessed him to get at the soul of that symphony.

He went to the concert, and heard nothing of the rest of the music, but sat like a man in a dream; and when the time came for the symphony, he was trembling with excitement. There was a long silence; and then suddenly came the first theme--those fearful hammer-strokes that cannot be thought without a shudder. They beat upon Thyrsis' very heart-strings, and he sat appalled; and straight out he went upon the tide of that mighty music-passion--without knowing it, without knowing how. He forgot that he was trying to understand a symphony; he forgot where he was, and what he was; he only knew that gigantic phantoms surged within him, that his soul was a hundred times itself. He never guessed that an orchestra was playing a second theme; he only knew that he saw a light gleam out of the storm, that he heard a voice, pitiful, fearful, beautiful beyond utterance, crying out to the furies for mercy; and that then the storm closed over it with a roar. Again and again it rose; Thyrsis did not know that this was the "working-out portion" that had forever been his bane. He only knew that it struggled and fought his fight, that it pleaded and sobbed, and rose higher and higher, and began to rejoice--and that then came the great black phantom-shape sweeping over it; and the iron hammer-strokes of Fate beat down upon it, crushed it and trampled it into annihilation. Again and again this happened, while Thyrsis sat clutching the seat, and shaking with wonder and excitement. Never in his experience had there been anything so vast, so awful; it was more than he could bear, and when the first movement came to an end--when the soul's last hope was dead--he got up and rushed out. People who passed him on the streets must have thought that he was crazy; and afterwards, that day and forever, he lived all his soul's life in music.

As a result of this Thyrsis paid all his bank-account for a violin, and went to see a teacher.

"You are too old," the teacher said.

But Thyrsis answered, "I will work as no one ever worked before."

"We all do that," replied the other, with a smile. And so they began.

And so all day long, with fingers raw, and arms and back shuddering with exhaustion, Thyrsis sat and practiced, the spirit of Music beckoning him on. It was in a boarding-house, and there was a

nervous old man in the next room, and in the end Thyrsis had to move. By the time he went away to the country, he was able to play a melody in tune; and then he would take some one that had fascinated him, and practice it and practice it night and day. He would take his fiddle every morning at eight and stride out into the forest, and there he would stay all day with the squirrels. They told him once how a new arrival, driving over in the hotel 'bus at early dawn, had passed an old Italian woman toiling up a hill and singing for dear life the "Tannhauser March." It chanced that the new arrival was a musician, and he leaned out and asked the old woman where she had learned it. And this was her explanation;

"Dey ees a crazy feller in de woods--he play it all day for tree weeks!"

Section 14. By this time Thyrsis had finished at college, passing comfortably near the bottom of his class, and had betaken himself to a university as a graduate student. He was duly registered for a lot of courses, and spent his time when he should have been at the lectures, sitting in a vacant class-room reading the book that had fascinated him last. His note-book began at that time to show two volumes a day on an average, and once or twice he stopped at night to wonder how it had actually been possible for him to read poetry fourteen hours a day for a whole week and not be tired.

He taught himself German, and that led to another great discovery--he made the acquaintance of Goethe. The power of that mighty spirit took hold of him, so that he prayed to him when he was lonely, and kept the photograph of the young poet in his pocket, to gaze at it as at a lover. The great eyes came to haunt him so that one night he awoke crying out, because he had dreamed he was going to meet Goethe.

In the catalog of the university there were listed a number of courses in "rhetoric and English composition". They were for the purpose of teaching one how to write, and the catalog set forth convincingly the methods whereby this was done. Thyrsis wished to know all there was to know about writing, and so he enrolled himself for an advanced course, and went for an hour every day and listened to expositions of the elements of sentence-structure by Prof. Osborne, author of "American Prose Writers" and "The Science of Rhetoric". The professor would give him a theme, and bid him bring in a five-hundred word composition. Perhaps it was that Thyrsis was lacking in the play-spirit; at any rate he could not write convincingly on the subject of "The Duty of the College Man to Support Athletics." He struggled for a month against his own impotence, and then went to see his instructor.

"I think," he said, "I shall have to drop Course A."

The professor gazed over his spectacles at him.

"Why?"

"I don't think I am getting any good out of it."

"But how can you tell what good you are getting?"

"I don't seem to feel that I am," said Thyrsis, deprecatingly.

"It is not to be supposed that you would feel it," said the other--"not at this early stage. You must wait."

"But I don't like the method, sir."

"What's wrong with the method?"

Thyrsis was embarrassed. He was not sure, he said; but he did not think that writing could be taught. Anyway, one had first to have something worth saying--

"Are you laboring under the delusion that you know anything about writing?" demanded the professor. (He had written across Thyrsis' last composition the words, "Feeble and trivial".)

"Why, no," began the boy.

"Because if you are, let me disabuse your mind at once. There is no one in the class who knows less about writing than yourself."

"I think," said Thyrsis, "it's because I can't bring myself to write in cold blood. I have to be interested. I'm sure that is the trouble."

"I'm sure," said the other, "that the trouble is that you think you know too much."

"I'm sorry, sir," said Thyrsis, humbly. "I've tried my best---"

"It is my business to teach students to write. I've given my life to that, and I think I know something about it. But you think you know more than I do. That's all."

And so they parted. Thyrsis kept a vivid recollection of this interview, for the reason that at a later stage of his career he came into contact with Prof. Osborne again, and got another glimpse of the authoritarian attitude towards the art of letters.

Section 15. Thyrsis had not many friends at college, and none at all at the university. He had no time to make any; and besides, there was a certain facetious senior who had caught him hurrying through the corridors one day, declaring in excitement that---

"Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow!"

But he had long ago ceased to hope for a friend, or to care what anybody thought about him; it was clear to him by this time that he had made himself into a poet, and was doomed to be unhappy. His mother had given up all hope of seeing him a bishop, and they had compromised upon a judgeship; but here at the university there was a law-school, and he met the students, and saw that this, too, could not be. These "lawyers" were not seeking knowledge for the love of it--they were studying a trade, by which they could rise in the world. They were not going out to do battle for truth and justice--they were perfecting themselves in cunning, so that they might be of help in money-disputes; they were sharpening their wits, to make them useful tools for the opening of treasure-chests. And

this attitude to life was written all over their personalities; they seemed to Thyrsis a coarse and roistering crew, and he shrunk from them in repugnance.

He went his own impetuous way. He stayed at the university until he had taught himself French and Italian, as well as German, and had read all the best literature in those languages. And likewise he heard all the best music, and went about full of it day and night. By this time he had definitely beaten his devils, and had come to be master of himself; and though nobody guessed anything about it, there was a new marvel going on within him--he had, in a spiritual sense, become pregnant.

There were many signs by which this state might have been known. He went quite alone, and spoke to no man; he was self-absorbed, and walked about with his eyes fixed on vacancy; he was savage when disturbed, and guarded his time unscrupulously. He had given up the very last of the formalities of life--he no longer attended any lectures, or wore cuffs, and he would not talk at meal-times. He took long walks at impossible hours, and he was fond of a certain high hill where the storms blew. These things had been going on for a year; and now the book that had been coming to ripeness in his mind was ready to be born.

It had its origin in the reading of history, and the fronting of old tyranny in its cruel forms. Thyrsis had come to hate Christianity for many things by that time, but most of all he hated it because it taught the bastard virtue of Obedience. Thyrsis obeyed no man--he lived his life; and the fiery ardor with which he lived it was taking form in his mind as a personality. He was dreaming a hero who should be Resistance incarnate; the passionate assertion of man's right and of man's defiance.

It was in the days of ferocity in Italy, the days of the despot and the bravo; and Thyrsis' hero was a minstrel, a mighty musician whose soul was free. And he sung in the despot's hall, and wooed the despot's daughter. This was the minstrel of "Zulieka"---

"His ladder of song was slight,
But it reached to her window's height;
Each verse so frail was the silken rail,
From which her soul took flight."

Thyrsis went about quite drunk with the burning words with which the minstrel won the lady, and tore her free from the mockeries of convention, and that divinity that doth hedge about a princess. He bore her away, locked tightly in his arms, and all his own--into the great lonely mountains; and there lived the minstrel and the princess, the lord and the lady of an outlaw band. But the outlaws were cruel, and the minstrel sought goodness; and so there was a struggle, and he and the lady went yet deeper into the black forest, where they dwelt alone in a hut, he a prince of hunters and she a princess of love. But the outlaws led the despot to the place, and there was a battle; the princess was slain, and the minstrel escaped in the darkness. All night he roamed the forest, and in the morning he lay by the roadside with a bow in his hand, and when the despot rode by he rose and drove the shaft through his heart. Then they captured him, and tortured him, and he died with a song of mockery and defiance upon his lips.

Section 16. Now, when these things first came to Thyrsis, he whispered in awe that it would be a life-time before he could write them. And a year passed thus, while every emotion of his life poured itself into some part of that story, and every note of music that he heard came out of the minstrel's heart. At last the time came when he was so full of it that he could no longer find peace; when the wonder of it was such that he walked along the street laughing, and with tears in his eyes. Then he said to himself, "It must be done! Now! Now!" And he looked about him as a woman might, seeking some place for her labor.

That was in the late winter, when the professors at the university, and all his relatives and acquaintances, had given him up as a hopeless case. He had stopped all his writing for money--he had a hundred dollars laid by, and that would suffice him; and he was wandering about whispering to himself: "The spring-time! The spring-time! For it must be in the country!" When April had come he could stand it no longer--he must go! So he left all behind him, and set out for a place in the wilderness.

When he reached it, he found a lake that was all ice, and mountains that were all snow; the country people, who had never seen a poet, and knew not the subtle difference between inspiration and insanity, heard with wonder that he was going out into the woods. But he set out alone, through the snowy forest and along the lake-shore, to find some place far away, where he could build a hut, or even put up a tent; and when he was miles from the village, he came suddenly on a little wonderland that made his heart leap like the wild deer in the brake. Here was a dreamland palace, a vision beyond all thinking--a little shanty built of logs! It stood in a pretty dell, with a mountain streamlet dashing through it, and the mighty forest hiding it, and the lake spread out in front of it. It was all wet snow, and freezing rain, and mud and desolation; but Thyrsis saw the summer that was to be, and he sat down upon a stone and gazed at it, and laughed and sang for wonder and joy.

Then he fled back to the village, and found the owner of the earthly rights to this paradise, and hired it for a little gold; and then he moved out, in spite of the snow. At last his soul was free!

Twice a week they brought him provisions, and there he stayed. At first he nearly froze at night, and he had to write with his gloves on; but he did not feel the cold, because of the fire within. He climbed the mountains and yelled with the mad wind, and tramped through the bare, rocking forest, singing his minstrel songs. And all these days he walked with God, and there was no world at all save the world of nature. Millions of young-hearted things sprang up out of the ground to welcome him; the forests shook out their dazzling sheen, and the wild birds went mad in the mornings. All the time Thyrsis was writing, writing--thrilling with his ecstasy, and pouring out all his soul. He kept a little diary these days, and for weeks there was but one entry--"The book! The book!"

And then one day came a letter from his mother, saying that she was coming to the village nearby to spend the summer; also that Corydon's mother was coming, and that Corydon would be with her!

BOOK II

THE SNARE

The streamlet tinkled on. She sat, gazing about her at each familiar tree and rock. And meanwhile he was reading again from the book--

"Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd!"

"Is that from 'Thyrsis'?" she asked. "Read me those lines that we used, to love so much."

And so he turned the page, and read again--

"A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
Shy to illumine; and I seek it, too.
This does not come with houses or with gold,
With place, with honor, and a flattering crew:
'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold--
But the smooth-slipping weeks
Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;
Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired." _

Section 1. On the train Corydon was writing a letter to a friend, to say where she was going, and that Thyrsis was there. "I don't expect to see anything of him," she wrote. "He grows more egotistical and more contemptuous every day, and I cordially dislike him."

But when a man has spent three or four weeks with no company save the squirrels and the owls, there comes over him a mood of sociability, when the sight of a friendly face is an event. Thyrsis had now written several chapters of his book, and the first fury of his creative impulse had spent itself. So when Corydon stepped from the train, she found him waiting there to greet her; and he told her that he was laying in supplies for a feast, and that on the morrow she and her mother were to come out and see his fairy-palace and have a picnic dinner.

They came; and the May put on her finest raiment for their greeting. The sun shone warm and bright, and there was a humming and stirring in grass and thicket; one could feel the surge of the spring-time growth as a living flood. There was a glory of young green over the hill-sides, and a quivering sheen of white in the aspens and birches. Corydon clasped her hands and cried out in rapture when she saw it.

And Thyrsis, picturesque in his old corduroy trousers and his grey flannel shirt, played the host. He showed them his domestic

establishment--wherein things were set in order for the first time since he had come. He told all his adventures: how the cold had crept in at night, and he had to fiddle to keep his courage up; how he had slept in a canvas-cot for the first time, and piled all the bedding on top, and wondered that he was cold; how he had left the pail with the freshly-roasted beef on the piazza, and a wild cat had carried off pail and all. He made fun of his amateur house-keeping-- he would forget things and let them burn, or let the fire go out; and he had tried living altogether on cold food, to the great perplexity of his stomach.

Then he gave a demonstration of his hard-won culinary skill. He boiled rice and raisins, and fried bacon and eggs; and they had fresh bread and butter, and jam and pickles, and a festive cake. And after they had feasted, Thyrsis stretched himself and leaned back against the trunk of a tree, and gazed up at the sky, quoting the words of a certain one-eyed Kalandar, son of a king, "Verily, this indeed is life! 'Tis pity 'tis fleeting!"

Afterwards he took Corydon for a walk. They climbed the hill where he came to battle with the stormwinds, and to watch the sunsets and the moon rising over the lake. And then they went down into the glen, where the mountain streamlet tumbled. Here had been wood-sorrel, and a carpet of the white trillium; and now there was adder's tongue, quaint and saucy, and columbine, and the pale dusty corydalis. There was soft new moss underfoot, and one walked as if in a temple.

Thyrsis pointed out a seat beside a deep bubbling pool. "Here's where I sit and write," he said.

"And how comes the book?" asked Corydon.

"Oh, I'm hammering at it--that's the best I can say."

"What is it?"

"Why--it's a story. I suppose it'll be called a romance, though I don't like the word."

Corydon pondered for a moment. "I wouldn't expect you to be writing anything romantic," she said.

Thyrsis, occupied with his own thoughts, observed, "I might call it a revolutionary romance."

"What is it about?"

He hesitated. "It happens in the middle ages," he said. "There's a minstrel and a princess."

"That sounds interesting," said Corydon.

Now in the period of pregnancy the artist's mood is one of secretiveness. But afterwards there comes a time for promulgation and rejoicing; and already there had been hints of this in the mind of Thyrsis. The great secret that he was cherishing--what would be the world's reception of it? And now suddenly a wild idea came to him. He had heard somewhere that it is the women who read fiction.

And was not Corydon a perfect specimen of the average middle-class young lady, and therefore of that mysterious potentiality, "the public", to which he must appeal? Why not see what she would think of it?

He took the plunge. "Would you like me to read it to you?" he asked.

"Why, certainly," she replied, and then added, gently, "If it wouldn't be a desecration."

"Oh, no," said Thyrsis. "You see, when it's been printed, all sorts of people will read it."

So he went back to the house and brought the precious manuscript; and he placed Corydon in the seat of inspiration, and sat beside her and read.

In many ways this was a revolutionary romance. Thyrsis had not spent any of his time delving into other people's books for "local color"; he was not relying for his effects upon gabardines and hauberks, and a sprinkling of "Yea, sires," and "prithees." His castle was but the vaguely outlined background of a stage upon which living hearts wrought out their passions. One saw the banquet-hall, with its tapestries and splendor, and the master of it, the man of force; there were swift scenes that gave one a glimpse of the age-long state of things--

"Right forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne."

There was a quarrel, and a cruel sentence about to be executed; and then the minstrel came. His fame had come before him, and so the despot, in half-drunken playfulness, left the deciding of the quarrel to him. He was brought to the head of the table, and the princess was led in; and so these two met face to face.

Here Thyrsis paused, and asked, "Are you interested?"

"Go on, go on," said Corydon.

So he read about his princess, who was the embodiment of all the virtues of the unknown goddess of his fancy. She was proud yet humble, aloof yet compassionate, and above all ineffably beautiful. And as for the minstrel--

"The minstrel was fair and young.
His heart was of love and fire."

He took his harp, and first he pacified the quarrel, and then he sang to the lady. He sang of love, and the poet's vision of beauty; but most of all he sang of the free life of the open. He sang of the dreams and the spirit-companions of the minstrel, and of the wondrous magic that he wields--

"Secrets of all future ages
Hover in mine ecstasy;
Treasures never known to mortals
Hath my fancy hid for thee!"

He sang the spells that he would weave for her, the far journeys she should take--

"For thy soul a river flowing
Swiftly, over golden sands,
With the singing of the steersman
Stealing into wonderlands!"

Section 2. This song was as far as Thyrsis had written, and he paused. Corydon was sitting with her hands clasped, and a look of enthralment upon her face. "Oh, beautiful! beautiful!" she cried.

A thrill of pleasure went through the poet. "You like it, then?" he said.

"Oh, I like it!" she answered. And then she gazed at him, with wide-open eyes of amazement. "But you! You!" she exclaimed.

"Why not I?" he asked.

"How in the world did you do it? Where did you get it from?"

"It is mine," said Thyrsis, quickly.

"But I can't imagine it! I had no idea you were interested in such things!"

"But how could you know what I am interested in?"

"I see how you live--apart from everybody. And you spend all your time in books!"

Thyrsis suddenly recollected something which had amused him very much. Corydon had been reading "Middlemarch," and had told him that Dr. Casaubon reminded her of him. "And so I'm still just a bookworm to you!" he laughed.

"But isn't your interest in things always intellectual?" she asked.

"Then you suppose I'm doing this just as an exercise in technique?" he countered.

"It's taken me quite by surprise," said Corydon.

"We have three faculties in us," Thyrsis propounded--"intellect, feeling, and will; and to be a complete human being, we have to develop all of them."

"But you spend so much time piling up learning!"

"I need to know a great many things," he said. "I'm not conscious of studying anything I don't need for my purpose."

"What is the purpose?" she asked.

He touched the precious manuscript. "This," he said.

There was a pause.

"But you lose so much when you cut yourself off from the world," said Corydon. "And there are other people, whom you might help."

"People don't need my help; or at least, they don't want it."

"But how can you know that--if you never go among them?"

"I can judge by the lives they live."

"Ah!" exclaimed Corydon, quickly, "but people aren't to blame for the lives they live!"

"Why not?" he asked.

"Because--they can't help them. They are bound fast."

"They should break loose."

"That is easy for you to say," said Corydon. "You have no ties."

"I did have them--I might have them still. But I broke them."

"Ah, but you are a man!"

"What difference does that make?"

"It makes all the difference in the world. You can earn money, you can go away by yourself. But suppose you were a girl--shut up in a home, and told that that was your 'sphere'?"

"I'd fight," said Thyrsis--"I'd break my way out somehow, never fear. If one doesn't break out, it simply means that his desire is not strong enough."

Thyrsis had been surprised at the depth of Corydon's interest in his manuscript; he had not supposed that she would be so susceptible to anything of the imagination. And now he was surprised to see that her hands were clenched tightly, and that she sat staring ahead of her intently.

"Are you dissatisfied with your life?" he asked.

"Is there anything in it that I could be satisfied with?" she cried.

"I had no idea of that," he said.

"No," she replied; "that only shows how stupid you can be!"

"But--you never showed any signs--"

"Didn't you know that I was trying to prepare for college last year?"

"Yes; but you gave it up."

"What could I do? I had no help--no encouragement. I was groping like a blind person. And I told you about it."

"But I told you what to study," objected Thyrsis.

"Yes," said the girl; "but how could I do it? You know how to study--you've been taught. But I don't know anything, and I don't know how to find anything out. I began on the Latin, but I didn't even know how the words should be pronounced."

"Nobody else knows that," observed Thyrsis, somewhat inconsequently.

"It was all so dull and dreary," she went on--"everything they would have had me learn. I wanted things that had life in them, things that were beautiful and worth while--like this book of yours, for instance."

"I am really delighted that you like it," said Thyrsis, touched by that.

"Tell me the rest of it," she said.

Section 3. Thyrsis told his story at some length; in the ardor of her sympathy his imagination took fire, and he told it eloquently, he discovered new beauties in it that he had not seen before. And Corydon listened with growing delight and amazement.

"So that is the way you spend your time!" she exclaimed.

"That is the way," he said.

"And that is why you live like a hermit!"

"Yes, that is why."

"And you think that you would lose your vision if you went among people?"

"I know that I should."

"But how do you know?"

"I know because I have tried. You don't realize how hard I have to work over a thing like this. I have carried it in my mind for a year; I have lived for nothing else--I have literally had no other interest in the world. Every sentence I have read to you has been the product of work added to work--of one impulse piled upon another--of thinking and criticizing and revising. Just the little bit I have done has taken me a whole month, and I have hardly stopped to eat; it's been my first thought in the morning and my last at night. And when the mood of it comes to me, then I work in a kind of frenzy that lasts for hours and even days; and if I give up in the middle and fall back, then I have to do it all over again. It's like toiling up a mountain-side."

"I see," whispered Corydon. "And then, do you expect to have no human relationships as long as you live?"

Thyrsis pondered for a moment. "Did you ever read Mrs. Browning's poem, 'A Musical Instrument'?" he asked.

"No," she answered.

"It's a most beautiful poem," he said; "and it's hardly ever quoted or read, that I can find. It tells how the great god Pan came down by the river-bank, and cut one of the reeds to make himself a pipe. He sat there and played his music upon it--

'Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
Piercing sweet by the river!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies reviv'd, and the dragon-fly
Came back to dream on the river.

'Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man.
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,--
For the reed which grows nevermore again
As a reed with the reeds in the river.'"

Thyrsis paused. "Do you see what it means?" he asked.

"Yes," said Corydon, "I see."

"'Making a poet out of a man!' That is one of the finest lines I know. And that's the way I feel about it--I have given up all other duties in the world. If I can write one book, or even one poem, that will be an inspiration to men in the future--why, then I have done far more than I could do by a lifetime given to helping people around me."

"I never understood before," said Corydon.

"That is the idea the minstrel tries to voice to the princess. At first he pours out his soul to her; but then, when he finds that she loves him, he is afraid, and tries to persuade her not to come with him. He tells her how lonely and stern his life is; and she has been born to a gentle life--she has her station and her duty in the world. But the more he pleads the hardness of his life, the more she sees she must go with him. Even if the end be death to her, still she will be an inspiration to him, and give wings to his music. 'Be silent,' she tells him--'let me fling myself away for a song! To do one deed that the world remembers, to utter one word that lives forever--that is worth all the failure and the agony that can come to one woman in her lifetime!'"

Corydon sat with her hands clasped. "Yes," she said, "that is the way she would feel!"

"I'm glad to hear you say that," remarked the other. "I must make it real; and I've been afraid about it. Would she really go with him?"

"She would go if she loved him," said Corydon.

"If she loved him. But she must love his art still more."

"She must love _him,"_ said Corydon.

Thyrsis shook his head. "It would not do for her to go with him for that," he said.

"Why not? Doesn't he love her?"

"Yes; but he is afraid to tell her so. They dare not let that sway them."

"I don't understand. Why not?"

"Because personal love is a limited thing, and comparatively an ignoble thing."

"I don't see how there can be anything more noble than true love between a man and a woman," declared Corydon.

"It depends on what you mean by 'true' love," replied Thyrsis. "If two people love each other for their own sakes, and go together, they soon come to know each other, and then they are satisfied--and their growth is at an end. What I conceive is that two people must lose themselves, and all thought of themselves, in their common love for something higher--for some great ideal, some purpose, some vision of perfection. And they seek this together, and they rejoice in finding it, each for the other; and so they have always progress and growth--they stand for something new to each other every day of their lives. To such love there is no end, and no chance of weariness or satiety."

"I had never thought of it just so," said the girl. "But surely there must be a personal love in the beginning."

"I don't know," he responded. "I hadn't thought about that. I'm afraid I'm impersonal by nature."

"Yes," she said, "that's what has puzzled me. Don't you love human beings?"

"Not as a rule," he confessed.

"But then--what is it you are interested in? Yourself?"

"People tell me that's the case. And there's a sense in which it's true--I'm wrapped up in the thought of myself as an art-work. I've a certain vision of the possibilities of my own being, and I'm trying to realize it. And if I do, then I can write books and communicate it to other people, so that they can judge it, and see if it's any better than the vision they have. It is a higher kind of unselfishness, I think."

"I see," said Corydon. "It's not easy to understand."

"No one understands it," he replied. "People are taught that they must sacrifice themselves for others; and they do it, blindly and stupidly, and never ask if the other person is worthy of the sacrifice--and still less if they themselves have anything worth sacrificing."

Corydon had clenched her hands suddenly. "How I hate the religion of self-sacrifice!" she cried.

"Mine is a religion of self-development," said Thyrsis. "I am

sacrificing myself for what other people ought to be."

Section 4. They came back after a time, to the subject of love; and to the ideal of it which Thyrsis meant to set forth in the book. It was the duty of every soul to seek the highest potentiality of which it had vision; and as one did that for himself, so he did it for the person he loved. There could be no higher love than this--to treat the thing beloved as one's self, to be perpetually dissatisfied with it, to scourge it to new endeavor, to hold it in immortal discontent.

This was a point about which they argued with eager excitement. To Thyrsis, love itself was a prize to be held before the loved one; whereas Corydon argued that love must exist before such a union could be thought of. Her cheeks flushed and her eyes shone as she maintained the thesis that the princess could not go with the minstrel unless his love was given to her irrevocably.

"If you mean by love a sense of oneness in the pursuit of an ideal, then I agree with you," said Thyrsis. "But if you mean what love generally means--a mutual admiration, the worshipping of another personality--then I don't."

"And are lovers not even to be interesting to each other?" cried Corydon.

But the poet did not shrink even from that. "I don't think a woman could be interesting to me--except in so far as she was growing. And she must always know that if she stopped growing, she would cease to be interesting. That is not a matter of anybody's will, it seems to me--it is a fact of soul-chemistry."

"I don't think you will find many women to love you on that basis," said Corydon.

"I never expected to find but one," was Thyrsis' reply; "and I may not find even one."

She sat watching him for a moment. "I had never realized the sublimity of your egotism," she said. "It would never occur to you to judge anyone else by your own standards, would it?"

"That is very well put," laughed Thyrsis. "As a matter of fact, I have a maxim that I count all things lost in the world but my own soul."

"Why is that?"

"Because I can depend on my own soul; and I have not yet met anything else in life of which I can say that."

Again there was a pause. "You are as hard as iron!" exclaimed the girl.

"I am harder than anything you can find for your simile," he answered. "I know simply that there is no force existing that can turn me from my task."

"You might meet some woman who would fascinate you."

"Perhaps," he replied. "I have done things I'm ashamed of, and I've a wholesome fear of doing more of them. But I know that that woman, whoever she might be, would wake up some morning and find me missing."

Then for a while he sat staring at the eddies in the pool below. "I have a vision of another kind of woman," he said--"a woman to whom my ideal would be the same compelling force that it is to me--a living thing that would drive her, that she was both master of, and slave to, as I am. So that she would feel no fears, and ask no favors! So that she would not want mercy, nor ask pledges--but just give herself, as I give myself, and take the chances of the game. Don't you think there may be just one such woman in the world?"

"Perhaps," was the reply. "But then--mightn't a woman be sure of your ideal, but not of you?"

"As to that," said Thyrsis, "she would have to know me.

"As to that," said Corydon, "she would have to love you."

And Thyrsis smiled. "As in most arguments," he said, "it's mainly a matter of definitions."

Section 5. At this point there came a call from the distance, and Corydon started. "There is mother," she exclaimed. "How the afternoon has flown!"

"And must you go home now?" he asked.

"I'm afraid so," she replied. "We have a long row."

"I'm sorry," he said. "I wanted to advise you about books to read. You must let me help you to find what you are seeking."

"Ah," said Corydon, "if you only will!"

"I will do anything I can," he said. "I am ashamed of not having helped you before."

They had risen and started towards the house. "Can't you come to-morrow, and we can talk it over," he said.

"But I thought you were going to work," she objected.

"I can spare another day," he replied. "A rest won't hurt me, I know. And it's been a real pleasure to talk to you this afternoon."

So they settled it; and Thyrsis saw them off in the boat, and then he went back to the little cabin.

On the steps he stood still. "Corydon!" he muttered. "Little Corydon!"

That was always the way he thought of her; not only because he had known her when she was a child, but because this expressed his conception of her--she was so gentle and peaceable and meek. She was now eighteen, and he was only twenty, but he felt towards her as a

grandfather might. But now had come this new revelation, that astonished him. She had been deeply stirred by his work--she had loved it; and this was no affectation, it was out of her inmost heart. And she was not really contented at all--she had quite a hunger for life in her!

It had been like an explosion; the barriers had been destroyed between them, and he saw her as she really was. And he could hardly believe it--all through the adventures that followed he would find himself standing in the same kind of daze, whispering to himself--"Corydon! Little Corydon!"

He did not try to do any work that evening. He thought about her, and the problem of her life. She had stirred him strangely; he saw her beautiful with a new kind of beauty. He resolved that he would put her upon the way to some of the joy she sought.

She came early the next morning, and they sat by the lake-shore and talked. They talked about the things she needed to study, and how she should study them; about the books she had read and the books she was to read next. And from this they went on to a hundred questions of literature and philosophy and life. They became eager and excited; their thoughts took wings, and they lost all sense of time and place. There were so many things to be discussed!

Corydon, in spite of all her anti-clericalism, believed in immortality; she laid claim to intuitions and illuminations concerning it. And to Thyrsis, on the other hand, the idea of immortality was the consummation of all unfaith. To him life was a bubble upon the stream of time, a shadow of clouds upon the mountains; there was nothing about it that could be or should be immortal.

"The act of faith," he cried, "is to give ourselves into the arms of life, to take it as it comes, to rejoice in its infinite unfoldment, the 'plastic dance of circumstance'; to behold the budding flower and the new-born suns as equal expressions of the joy of becoming. But people are weak, they love themselves, and they set themselves up as the centre of existence!"

But Corydon was personal, and loved life; and she stood out that death was unthinkable--that she had the sense of infinity within her. Thyrsis strove to make her see that one was to wreak one's hunger for infinity at each moment, and not put it off to any future age; that life was a thing for itself, and needed no sequel to justify it. "It is a free gift, and we have no claim upon it; we must take it on the terms of the giver."

From that they came to religion. Thyrsis loved the forms of the old faiths, because of the poetry there was in them; and so he wrestled with Corydon's paganism. He tried to show her how one could read "Paradise Lost" and the English prayer-book, precisely as one read Virgil and Homer; to which Corydon answered that she had been to Sunday-school.

"But you once believed in Santa Claus!" he retorted. "And does that make you quarrel with him now? Every time you read a novel, don't you pretend to believe in people who never existed?"

He went on to show her how much she lost of the sublime and inspiring things of the past. He took the story of Jesus. It mattered not in the least if it was fiction or fact--it was there, as an achievement of the human spirit. He showed her the man of the gospels--not the stained-glass god with royal robes and shining crown, but the humble workingman, with his dream of a heaven nearby, and a father who loved his children without distinction. He went about among the poor and humble, the world's first revolutionist; teaching the supremacy of the soul--a doctrine which was to be as dynamite beneath the pillars of all established institutions. He lived as a tramp and an outcast, and he died the death of a criminal; and now those who had murdered him were using his doctrines to enslave the world!--All this was a new idea to Corydon, and she resolved forthwith that she would begin her readings with the New Testament.

Section 6. So it went, until Thyrsis looked up with a start, and saw that the shadows were falling. It was five o'clock, and they had not stopped to eat! Even so, they had no time to cook, but made a cold meal--and talked all the time they were eating.

Then Corydon said, "I must start for home."

"You won't want any supper," said Thyrsis. "Let's see the sunset first."

"But mother will be expecting me," she objected.

"She'll know you're all right," he replied.

So they climbed the hill, and sat and watched the sunset and the rising full moon. The air was clear, and the sky like opal, and the pale, pearly tints of the clouds were ravishing to behold. To Thyrsis it seemed that these colors were an image of the soul that was disclosed to him. He would have been at a loss for words to describe the extraordinary sense of purity that Corydon gave to him; it was not simply her maidenhood--it was something far more rare than that. Here was an utterly perfect human soul; a soul without speck or blemish--without a base idea, with no trace of a vanity, unaware what a pretense might be. The joy and wonder of life welled spontaneously in her, she moved to a noble impulse as a cloud moves before the wind. She was like a creature from the skies they were watching.

And here, in the silver moonlight, a memorable hour came to them. Thyrsis told her of his consecration, and why he lived his hermit-life. He had known for years that he was not as other men; and now every hour it was becoming clearer to him. He shrunk from the word, because it had been desecrated by the world; but it was Genius. More and more frequently there was coming to him this strange ecstasy, the source of which he could not guess; it was like the giving way of flood-gates within him--the pouring in of a tide of wonder and joy. It made him tremble like a leaf, it made him cry aloud and fall down upon the ground exhausted. And yet, whatever the strain might be, he never lost his grip upon himself; rather, all the powers of his mind seemed to be multiplied--it seemed as if all existence became one with his soul.

Never before had he uttered a word of this to anyone. No one could

understand the burden it had laid upon him. For this was the thing that all the world was seeking, for the lack of which the world was dying; and it was his to give or to withhold, to lose or to save. He had to forge it and shape it, he had to embody it, to set it forth in images and symbols. And that meant a terrific labor, a feat of mental and emotional endurance quite indescribable. He must hold it, though it burned like fire; he must clutch it to his bosom, though it tore at his heart-strings.

"Sometimes," he said, "I fail and have to give up; and then I have nothing but a memory without words--or perhaps a few broken phrases that seem mere nonsense. Then I am like a man who has seen some loved one drowned or burned to death before his eyes. It is a thing so ineffable, so precious; and some power seeks to tear it away from me, to bear it into oblivion forever. I can't know, of course--it might come to some one else--or it might never come again. The feeling I have is like that of a mother for an unborn child; if I do not give it life, no one ever will. And don't you see--compared with that, what does anything else count? I would lie down and be crushed to pieces, if that would help; truly, I would suffer less than I suffer in what I try to do. And so, the things that other men care for--they simply don't exist for me. I must have a little money, because I have to have something to eat, and a place to work in. But I don't want position or fame--I don't shrink from any ridicule or humiliation. It seems like a mad thing to say, but I have nothing to do either with men's evil or with their good. I am not bound by any of their duties; I can't have any country or any home, I can't have wife or children--I can hardly even have any friends. Don't you see?"

"Yes," whispered Corydon, deeply moved, "I see."

"Look," he went on--"see all the vice and misery in the world--the cruelty and greed and hate. And see all the stupid and petty things, the narrow motives, the vanities and the jealousies! And all that is because people haven't this thing that has come to me; they don't know the possibilities of life, they lack the sense of its preciousness and sacredness. And they seek and seek--and go astray! Take drunkenness, for instance; that brings them joy, but it's a false scent, it leads them over a precipice. I've been down at the bottom of it--you know why I have to go there, and what I've seen. And that is where the best of men's faculties go--yes, it's literally true! The men who are dull and plodding, they are contented; it's the men who are adventurous and aspiring who come to that precipice. I walk down an avenue and see the lines of saloons with their gleaming lights, and that thought is like a scream of anguish in my soul; there came a phrase to me once, that I wanted to cry out to people--'the graveyards of your genius! the graveyards of your genius!'"

Corydon was gazing at his uplifted face. She said, "That is how Jesus must have felt, when he wept over Jerusalem."

"Yes," said Thyrsis. "It is a new religion trying to be born. Only nowadays they don't persecute you, they just ignore you. They don't hang you up on a cross and make you conspicuous and picturesque--they ridicule you and let you starve. And that is what I face, you see. I've saved a hundred dollars--just barely enough to buy me food until I've written the book!"

"And other people have so much!" cried Corydon.

"So much--and no idea what to do with it. They just fling it away, in a drunken frenzy. And down below are the poor, who slave to make civilization possible. Such lives as they have to live--I can't ever get the thought out of my mind, not in any happiest moment! I feel as if I were a man who had escaped from a beleaguered city, and it all depended upon me to carry the tidings and bring relief. I'm their one hope, and if I fail them I'm a traitor, an accursed being! They are ignorant and helpless, and their cry comes to me like some great storm-wind of grief and despair. Oh, some day I mean to utter words that will reach them--I can't fail! I can't fail!"

"No!" whispered Corydon. "You must not fail!"

They sat in silence for a while.

"How I wish that I could help you!" she said.

"Who can tell?" he answered. "Perhaps you may. A true friend is a rare thing to find."

"I would do anything in the world to share in such a work."

"You really mean that? As hard as it is?"

"I would bear anything," she said. "I would go to the ends of the earth for it. I would fling away the whole world--just as you have done."

"Ah, but are you strong enough? Could you stand it?"

"I don't know that--I'm only a child. But I wouldn't mind dying."

And so it came. It came as the dawn comes, unheralded, unheeded--spreading wider, till the day is there. Months afterwards they talked about it, and Thyrsis asked, "When did I propose to you?"

"I don't think you ever proposed to me," she answered. "It just came. It had to come--there was no other way."

"But when did I first kiss you?" he asked.

"I don't know even that," she said, and pondered.

"Did I kiss you that night when we sat on the hill?" he asked.

"I wouldn't have known it if you had," said Corydon. "It was as natural for you to kiss me as it was for me to draw my breath."

Section 7. The moon was high when they went down the hill, and he rowed her home. They were silent with the awe that was upon them. They found the people at home in a panic, but they scarcely knew this--and they scarcely troubled to explain.

Then Thyrsis went home, and spent half the night roaming about in excitement. And early in the morning he was sitting on the edge of

his canvas-cot, whispering to himself again, "Corydon! Little Corydon!"

He could not think of work that day, but set out to walk to the village by the lonely mountain-road; and half-way there he met the girl, coming in the other direction. There was a light of wonder in her eyes; and also there was perplexity. For all that morning she had been whispering to herself, "Thyrsis! Thyrsis!"

They sat by the roadside to talk it over.

"Corydon," he began, "I've been thinking about what we said last night, and it frightens me horribly. And I want to ask you please not to think about it any more. I could not take anyone else into my life--before God, I couldn't be so cruel. I have been shuddering at the thought of it. Oh please, please, run away from me--before it is too late!"

"Is that the way it seems?" she asked.

"Corydon!" he cried. "I am a tormented man! There can't be any happiness in the world for me. And you are so beautiful and so pure and so good--I simply dare not think of it! You must be happy, Corydon!"

"I have never yet been happy," she said.

"Listen," he went on--"there is a stanza of Walter Scott's that came to me this morning--an outlaw song. It seemed to sum up all my feeling about it:

"Maiden! a nameless life I lead,
A nameless death I'll die;
The fiend whose lantern lights the mead
Were better mate than I!"

Corydon sat staring ahead. "You can't frighten me away from you," she said, in a low voice. "It isn't worth your while to try. But let me tell you what I came to say. I'm so ignorant and so helpless--I didn't see how I could be of any use to you. And so I wanted to tell you that you must do whatever seemed best to you--just don't count me at all. You see what I mean--I'm not afraid for myself, but just for you. I couldn't bear the thought that I might be in your way. I felt I had to come and tell you that, before you went back to your work."

Now Thyrsis had set out with mighty battlements reared about him; and not all the hours and the courtesans of all the ages could have found a way to breach them. But before those simple sentences of Corydon's, uttered in her gentle voice, and with her maiden's gaze of wonder--the battlements crumbled and rocked.

And that was always the way of it. There were endless new explanations and new attitudes, new excursions and discoveries. They would part with a certain understanding, but they never knew with what view they would meet in the morning. They were swung from one extreme to the other, from certitude to doubt, from joy to dismay and despair. And so, day after day they would sit and talk, for uncounted hours. Corydon would come to the little cabin, or Thyrsis

would come to the village, and they would wander about the roads or the woods, forgetting their meals, forgetting all the world. Once they wandered away into the mountains, and they sat until the dusk closed round them; they were almost lost that night.

"Of course," Thyrsis had been saying, "we should not be married like other men and women."

"No," said Corydon, "of course not."

"We should be brother and sister," he said.

"Yes," she assented.

"And it would not be real marriage--I mean, it would be just for the world's eyes."

"So I don't see how it could hinder you," Corydon added. "Whatever I did that was wrong, you would tell me. And then too, about money. I shouldn't be any burden; for I have twenty-five dollars a month of my own."

"I had no idea of that," said Thyrsis.

"I've only had it for a year," said Corydon. "An aunt left me nearly four thousand dollars. I can't touch the principal until I'm thirty, but I have the income, and that will buy me everything I need. And so it would be just as if you didn't have me to think of."

"I don't think the money side matters so much," was his reply. "It's only this summer, you see--until I've finished the book."

Section 8. The key to all the future was the book; but alas, the book was not coming on. How could one write amid such excitement? This was a new kind of wine in Thyrsis' blood. This was reality! And before it his dream-phantoms seemed to have dissolved into nothingness.

They would make a compact for so many days, and he would start to work; but he would find himself thinking of Corydon, and new problems would arise, and he would take to writing her notes--and finally realize in despair that he might as well go and see her.

Meantime Corydon would be wrestling with tasks of her own. They had talked over her development, and agreed that what she needed was discipline. And because Thyrsis had read her some of Goethe's lyrics, she had decided to begin with German. Thyrsis had wasted a great deal of time with German courses in college, and so he was able to tell her everything not to do. He got her a little primer of grammar, just enough to make clear the language-structure; and then he set her to acquiring a vocabulary. He had little books full of words that he had prepared for himself, and these she drilled into her brain, all day and nearly all night. She stopped for nothing but to eat--in the woods when the weather was fair and in her room when it rained, she studied words, words, words! And she made amazing progress--while Thyrsis was wrestling with his angels she read Grimm's fairy tales, and some of Heyse's "Novellen," and "Hermann and Dorothea," and "Wilhelm Tell."

But these were children's tasks, and her pilgrimage was one of despair. Above were the heights where Thyrsis dwelt, inaccessible, almost invisible; and how many years must she toil to reach them! She would come to him with tears in her eyes--tears of shame for her ignorance and her stupidity. And then Thyrsis would kiss the tears away, and tell her how many brilliant and clever women he had met, who had the souls of dolls behind all their display of culture.

So Corydon would escape that unhappiness--but alas, only to fall into another kind. For she was a maiden, beautiful and tender, and ineffably precious to Thyrsis; and when they met, their hands would come together--it was as natural for them to embrace as for the flowers to grow. And this would lead to moods of weakness and satisfaction--not to that divine discontent, that rage of impatience which Thyrsis craved. It seemed to him that Corydon grew more and more in love with him, and more willing to cling to him; and he was savage because of his own complaisance. They would spend hours, exchanging endearments and whispering youthful absurdities; and then, the next day, he would write a note of protest, and Corydon would be wild with misery, and would tear up his love-notes, and vow in tears that he should never touch her hand again. Now and then he would try to suggest to her that what she needed for the fulfillment of her life was not a madman like himself, but a husband who would love her and cherish her, as other women were loved and cherished; and there was nothing in all the world that galled her quite so much as this.

Section 9. There came a time when all these happenings could no longer be hid from parents. This unthinkable "engagement" had to be announced, and the furies of grief and rage and despair unchained. No one could realize the change that had come over Corydon--Corydon, the meek and long-suffering, who now was turned to granite, and immovable as the everlasting hills. As for Thyrsis, all kinds of madness had come from him, and were expected from him. But even he was appalled at the devastation which this thunderbolt caused.

"You have ruined your career! You have ruined your career!" was the cry that rang in his ears all day. And he knew what the world meant by this. Young men of talent who wished to rise in the world did not burden themselves with wives at the age of twenty; they waited until their careers were safe--and meantime, if they felt the need, they satisfied their passions with the daughters of the poor. And it was for some such "eligible man" as this that the world had been preparing Corydon; it was to save her for his coming that her sheltered life had been intended. Her beauty and tenderness would appeal to him, her innocence would bring a new thrill to his jaded passions; and when he offered his hand, there would be no whisper of what his past might have been, there would be no questions asked as to any vices or diseases he might bring with him. There would be trousseaus and flowers and wedding-cake, rice and white ribbons and a honeymoon-journey; and then an apartment in the city, or perhaps even a whole house, with a butler and a carriage--who could tell? With wealth pouring into the metropolis from North and West and South, such things fell often to beautiful and innocent maidens in sheltered homes.

And here was this one, flinging herself away upon a penniless poet who could not support her, and did not even propose to try! "Does he mean to get some work?" was the question; and gently Corydon

explained that they intended "to live as brother and sister." And that capped the climax--that proved stark, raving madness, if it did not prove downright knavery and fraud.

In the end, being utterly baffled and helpless with dismay, the mothers turned upon each other; for to each of them, the virtues of her own offspring being so apparent, it was clear that this hideous tragedy must have come from the machinations of the other. One day Thyrsis and his mother, walking down a road, met Corydon and her mother, upon a high hill where the winds blew wildly; and here they poured out their grief, and hurled their impeachments against the storm. To Thyrsis they assumed heroic proportions, they towered like queens of tragedy; in after-history this was known as the Meeting of the Mothers, and he likened it to the great contest in the Nibelungenlied between Brunhild and Kriemhild.

Then, on top of it all, there came another calamity. In the boarding-house with Corydon lived some elderly ladies, who had a remarkable faculty for divining the evil deeds of other people. They had divined the evil deeds of Corydon and Thyrsis, and one of them was moved to come to Corydon's mother one day, and warn her lest others should divine them too. And so there was more agony; the discovery was made that Corydon had become a social outcast to all the maids and matrons of the summer population--a girl who went to visit a poet in his lonely cabin, and stayed until unknown hours of the night. And so there came to Thyrsis a note saying that Corydon must come no more to the cabin; and later in the day came Corydon herself, to bring the tidings that a telegram had come from the city, and that she and her mother were to leave the place the next day.

Thyrsis was aflame with anger, and was for going to the nearest parson and having the matter settled there and then. But Corydon dissuaded him from this.

"I've been thinking it over," she said, "and it's best that I should go. You must finish the book--everything depends upon that, and you know that if I came here now you couldn't do it. But if I go away, there'll be nothing to disturb you. I can study meantime; and when we meet in the city in the fall, everything will be clear before us."

She came and put herself in his arms. "You know, dear heart," she said, "it won't be easy for me to go. But I'm sure it's for the best!"

And Thyrsis saw that she was right, and so they settled it. She spent that day with him--their last day; and floods of tenderness welled up in their hearts, and the tears ran down their cheeks. It was only now that she was going that Thyrsis realized how precious she had become to him, and what a miracle of gentleness and trust she was.

They agreed that here, and not in the village, was the place for their parting. So they poured out their love and devotion, and made their pledges for the future; and towards sundown he kissed her good-bye, and put her in the boat, and stood watching until it was a mere speck down the lake. Then he went back to the house, with a great cavern of loneliness in his soul.

And in spite of all resolves, he was up with the dawn next day, and walking to the village--he must see her once again! He went to the depot with her, and upon the platform they said another farewell; thereby putting a seal upon Corydon's damnation in the eyes of the maids and matrons of the summer population.

BOOK III

THE VICTIM HESITATES

_They had opened a wooden box which lay beside them.

"Ten years!" she said. "How they have faded!"

"And the creases are tight," said he; "they will be hard to read."

"Letters! letters!" she exclaimed--"some of them sixty pages long! How much would they make?"

"Perhaps a quarter of a million words," he said.

"What is to be done about it?"

"They must be selected, and then cut, and then trimmed and pruned."

"And will that leave any idea of it?"

He answered with a simile. "You wish to convey to a man how it feels to pound stone for twelve hours in the sun. The only way you could really do it would be to take him and let him pound for twelve hours. But he wouldn't stand for that."

"So you let him pound for one hour," said she, with a smile.

"I will put up a sign," he said--_

'HERE BEGINS THE STONE-POUNDING!'

_And then those who are interested will come in and try it; and the rest will peer through the fence and pass on."

To which she responded, "I would make the sign read,_

'ADMISSION TO LOVERS ONLY!'"

MY THYRSIS!

Oh, if I might only stay in a convent until you are ready to take

me! Since I left you I find myself possessed of cravings, which, if I indulged them, might bring me the fate of the Maid of Neidpath!

Truly I have known some miserable moments. But I am trying very hard to cultivate a happy, confident activity. The people here are aggressive, and I am afraid I have been rude, which I never like to be. I just succeeded in getting away from a young man who wanted to walk to the village with me. Do you know, it would drive me absolutely mad to talk to anyone now!

My soul has only one cry, and I could sometimes go out on the mountain-side and scream it aloud to the winds. I fear I shall be a trifle wild, in fact utterly in pieces, until you come, with that wonderful recipe of yours for binding me together, and making me complete. I think of you in your house, and wish to God I were there, or out in the desert even, if you were with me.

When I passed through the city I felt exactly as if I were in Hades. The glaring lights and the fearful rattle, the lazy, lounging men--I had dinner in a restaurant, in which all the people seemed to be feeding demons! It has been distinctly shown me why so many people have thought you a rude unmannerly boy! I don't know what people would think, if I had to be amongst them long.

I have begun so many letters to you in my mind, and oh, the times I have told myself how much I loved you! I have read your letters and slept with them under my pillow, like the veriest love-lorn maiden. But all my happy thoughts are gone at present. It is distracting to me to have to come into such close contact with people.

Oh, tell me, dearest one, what I shall have to do to control myself and preserve the peace of my soul, until I go to you forever? I must not long to see you, it prevents me from studying. If you might only come to me at one moment in the day, and give me one kiss, and then go away! You see, I am conducting myself in a very unwise manner--and it is necessary I should study! I should love to have an indomitable capacity for work, and eat only two meals a day, and never have to think about my body.

I want to tell you what I feel, how utterly and absolutely I am yours, and how any image that comes between you and me enrages me. If only you knew how I give myself up to you in thought, word, and deed!--My one reason for acting now, is that I may show you something I have done, my one thought is to be what you would wish me. No one, no one understands, or ever will, what is in your heart and in mine--to be locked there for ages. There I have placed all my power of love and religion and hope of the life that is to be. To you I give all my trust, all my worship, you are the one link that binds me to myself and to God. Without you I feel now that I should be a poor wanderer.

You give me my feeling of wholeness, of the possibility of completion, that I never had before. In my best and truest moments I know that with you I can be what I have hoped. With you before my eyes I have a grim resolution to conquer or die. The one thing I am sure of always is my love for you. It might be possible for you to stop loving me; but I, now that I have begun, shall continue to love you to the day I die--and after, I hope. I do not love you for what you can give me, I love you because you are you, I must love you now no matter what you are. I believe Shakespeare was right when he said that "love is not love which alters, when it alteration finds." I do not believe that a person can really love more than once.

I must go to my German again and leave you. Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?

My dearest Corydon:

I received a letter from you before dinner, and as usual had one of my flights of emotion, and thought of many things to write to you. Now I am up on the mountain-side, trying to recall them. Dearest, you are, as always, more precious to me. I am glad to see that you are suffering some, and I think that it is well that you have to be away from me for awhile, to fight some of your own soul's battles. You see that I am in my stern humor; as convinced as ever that the soul is to be deepened only by effort, and that the great glory of life cannot be bought or stolen, or even given for love, but must be earned.

I will tell you what I have been doing since you left. I spent three whole days in the most unimaginable wretchedness; I had no hindrances like yours--only the most fearful burden of dullness and sloth, that had crept upon me and mastered me, during all the weeks that I had let myself be so upset and delayed. I cannot picture what I go through when I lose my self-command in that way, but it is like one who is tied down upon a railroad track and hears a train coming. He gets just as desperate as he pleases, and suffers anything you can imagine--but he does not get free. And always the book would be hanging before me, a kind of external conscience, to show me what I ought to have been.

Now I have gotten myself out of that, by an effort that has quite worn me out. When I found myself at work again, I felt a kind of savage joy of effort, a greater power than I ever knew before. In the reckless mood that I had got to, it seemed to me that I could keep so forever.

Now dearest, you must get the same unity in your life; you must concentrate all your faculties upon that--get for yourself that precious habit of being "instant in prayer", and "strenuous for the bright reward". As Wordsworth has it, "Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness!" Let it come to you with a pang that hurts you, that for one minute you have been idle, that you have admitted to yourself that life is a thing of no consequence, and that you do not care for it. I shall have to talk to you that way--perhaps not so often as I do to myself, because I do not think you are really in your heart such a very dull and sodden creature as I am.

I think the greatest trial we shall have will be our fondness for each other, and the possibility of being satisfied simply to hold each other in our arms. But we shall get the better of that, as of everything else; and that is not the problem now. You must learn to strive, learn to master yourself; you must prove your power so. Do not care how rude you have to be to those people; look upon the things about you as a kind of dream-world, and know that your own soul's life is the one real thing for you. And don't write any more about how circumstances hold you back. When you have got to work you will know that you are given your soul for no purpose but to fight circumstances; that they are the things to make you fight. When they are removed, as I know to my cost, there is still the same necessity of fighting; only it is like a horse who has to win a race without the spurs.

You must talk to yourself about this, night and day, until this desire is so awake in you that you can't go idle many moments

without its rushing into your mind, and giving you a kind of electric shock. And when that happens you fling aside every thing else, every idea but the work that you ought to be doing, and put all your faculties upon that; and every time that you catch them wandering, you do the same thing again, and again. Some times when I become very keenly aware of myself, and of what a shallow creature I really am, it seems to me that it is only by wearing myself out in that grim and savage way that I can make myself even tolerable.

I must stop. Do you know that for five precious hours by my watch I have sat up here thinking about you and writing to you? Dear me--and I am tired, and frozen, for there is a cold wind. I shall have, I see, to prove some of my powers, by not writing letters to you when I should be at the book.

I see that it takes four or five days for letters to come and go between us; and so if we write often, our letters will be crossing. Four or five days is time enough for us to change our moods a dozen times, so our correspondence will be apt to be complicated!

III

MY DEAREST THYRSIS:

It has worried me somewhat to-day that you might be utterly disappointed in the letter I wrote you. It was a wild jumble of words, but I was fighting all sorts of uncomfortable things within me. To-day I have been anything but despairing, and have "gone at" the German. In fact, I quite lost myself in it, and believe I understand thoroughly the construction of the first poem. Wonderful accomplishment!

Your words, as I read them again, dear heart, are full of a great beauty and fire and energy, and I only hope you may keep them always. I believe that the possibility of the marriage we both desire, depends greatly if not entirely on your sternness. You must realize it.

I cannot tell with the proper conditions and training what energy I might be able to accumulate for myself, but in the meanwhile the thing that makes me most wretched is my utter incapacity at times, and my inability to share with you your work. In my weaker and more helpless moods, I ask myself with a pang, whether I ought to go with you at all, when I cannot help you. But I must stop fuming. I have come out of my mudpuddle for good and for all, and that is the main consideration. I don't intend to go back.

We must not think of each other in any way but as co-workers in a great labor; we must simply know that our love is rooted deeply, and the harder we work the more firm it will be. There is no reason why we should not go to the altar with just this sternness, and from now on preserve this attitude until the day when we have earned the right to consider what love means. Can you do it? I will prove to you that I can.

IV

MY DEAR THYRSIS:

I am trying very dreadfully, and go away alone and pound at the German as if my life depended upon it. I go to bed every night with a tight feeling in my head, but I do not mind, as I take it for a guarantee that I have not rested.

And oh, my dearest, dearest and best, I am trying not to think of you too much--that is too much in a way that does not help me to study. But I love you really, yes, truly, and I know I would follow you anywhere. I am not particularly joyful, but then I do not expect to be for a great many years.

V

DEAR THYRSIS:

Only a few words. I have been hovering to-day between spurts of hopeful energy, and the most indescribable despair. It positively freezes my heart, and I have been on the point of writing to you and telling you to relieve yourself of the responsibility of me. The reason is because it seems a perfectly Herculean task to read "Egmont". I have to look up words in the dictionary until I am absolutely so weary I care not about anything; and then I think of you, and what you are able to do, and at one word from you I would give up all idea of marrying you.

I tell you I am up and down in this mood. Great God, I could work all day and all night if I could do what you do, but to strain at iron fetters--a snail! Oh, I cannot tell you--I simply groan under it. At such times I have no more idea of marrying you than of journeying to the moon. I repeat to you, to be constantly choked back, while you are rapidly advancing, will kill me. I don't know what you will say to this, but it is intolerable, unendurable, to me. When I think of your ability and mine, I simply laugh about it --Thyrsis, it is simply ridiculous. I do not ask you to take me with you, Thyrsis.

Do you wonder at my writing all this? You would not if you understood. It is so hard for me to keep any joy in my heart, and I get tired of repeated failures, that is all. I thought I must write you this, and have it over with. This is the style of letter I have always torn up, but this time it goes. I think I will practice the piano now, and try to get some gladness into my soul again.

VI

MY DEAR, DEAR THYRSIS:

There is a dreadful sort of letter which I wrote you last night which I haven't sent you yet.

I have been studying, or trying to most of the day, and my mind has wandered most painfully. There were two days in which I seemed to have hold of myself, but with an effort that was a fearful strain. I must try so, that it almost kills me, if I wish to accomplish even a little of what I ought. The heat here is almost insupportable, it is stifling, and I spent an hour or so in the water this afternoon.

And the thought is always torture to me--that you are accomplishing so much more than I! I was thinking of your letters to-night, and I

recalled some words that seemed to speak more of your love for me. Oh, Thyrsis, if your letters are fiery and passionate, is it for love of _me_ that they are? I'm almost afraid at times, when I read your letters--when you tell me of the kind of woman you _want_ to love.

I at present am certainly not she. And do you know that when we are married we shall be united forever? I don't know why I write you these things, they are not at all inspiring thoughts to me.

And yet I was able to go in swimming this afternoon, and forget everything and frolic around as happily as any water-baby!

VII

MY DEAR CORYDON:

I came off to write my poem, but I have been thinking about you, and I must write a long letter. It is one of the kind that you do not like.

In the first place, you complain of the contradictions in my letters. I am sorry. I live so, struggling always with what is not best in me, and continually falling down. Also, in this matter I am an utter stranger, groping my way; and there is an element of passion in it, a dangerous element, which leads me continually astray.

I can only say that in my ideal of love, which is utter love and spiritual love, I think of living my life with you in entire nakedness of soul. Therefore, I shall always be before you exactly as I should be by myself. And I shall write you now exactly what I have been thinking, what is hard and unkind in it, as well as the rest. You will learn to know me as a man far from perfect, often going astray himself, often feeling wrong things, often leading you astray and making you wretched. But behind all this there is the thing often lost sight of, but always present--the iron duty that I have, and the force in me which drives me to it.

All this morning I have been thinking of my book, losing myself in it and filling myself with its glory. This afternoon I fell to thinking about us; and thoughts which have been lurking in my mind for a long time got the upper hand for the first time. They were that I did not love you as I ought to, that I could not; that the love which I felt was a thing from my own heart, and that it had carried me away because I was anxious to persuade myself I had found my ideal upon earth; that you _could_ not satisfy the demands upon life that I made, and that if I married you it would be to make you wretched, and myself as well; that you had absolutely nothing of the things that I needed, and that the life which your nature required was entirely different from mine; that you had no realization of the madness that was driving me, could find and give me none of the power I needed; and that I ought to write and tell you this, no matter what it cost--that I owed it to the sacred possibility of my own soul, to live alone if I could live better alone. And when I had said these words, I felt a sense of relief, because they were haunting me, and had been for a long time.

How they will affect you I cannot tell, it depends upon deep your

love for me is; certainly they mean for me that my love is not deep, that you have not made yourself necessary to me. I think that in that last phrase I put the whole matter in its essence--you have not bound yourself to me; I am always struggling to keep my love firm and right, to hold myself to you. The result is that there is no food for my soul in the thought of our love, in my thought of you; and therefore, I am continually dissatisfied and doubting, continually feeling the difference between the love I have dreamed and our love.

I tried to think the matter out, and get to the very bottom of it. The first thing that came to me on the other side was your absolute truth; your absolute devotion to what was right and noble in our ideal. So that, as I was thinking, I suddenly stopped short with this statement--"If you cannot find right love with that girl, it must be because you do not honor love, or care for it." And then I thought of your helplessness, of your lack of training and opportunity for growth; and I told myself how absurd it was of me to expect satisfying love from you--when all that I knew about in life, and thought of, was entirely unknown to you. I realized that I was a man who had tasted more or less of all knowledge, and had an infinite vision of knowledge yet before him, and an infinite hunger for it; and that you were a school-girl, with all of a school-girl's tasks on your hands. So I said to myself that the reason for the dissatisfaction was a fault of my own, that it had come from my own blindness. I had gone wrong in my attitude to you; I had failed in my sternness and my high devotion to perfection; I had contented myself with lesser things, had come down from my best self, and had failed to make you see what a task was before you, if you ever meant to know my best self. You perceive that this is a return to my old-time attitude; I am sorry if it makes you wretched, but I cannot help it. It is a surgical operation that must be borne. I shall not make it necessary again, I hope.

Now, dear Corydon, I am not trying to choose pleasant words in this letter, this is the way I talk to myself. And if anything good comes from our love, it will be because of this letter. I challenge what is noblest in you to rise to meet the truth of it. I should not care to write to you if I did not feel that it would.

You have had a possibility offered to you, and because you are very hungry for life you have clasped it to you, placed all your happiness in it. The possibility is the love of a man whose heart has been filled with the fire of genius. There are few men whom life takes hold of as it does me, who sacrifice themselves for their duty as I do, who demand experience--knowledge, power, beauty--as I do. There are very few men who will wrest out of existence as much as I will, or know and have as much of life. I am a boy just now, and only beginning to live; but I have my purpose in hand, and I know that if I am given health and life, there is nothing that men have known that I shall not know, nothing that is done in the world that I shall not do, or try to. I have a strong physique, and I labor day and night, and always shall. I shall always be hungry and restless, always dissatisfied with myself, and with everything about me, and acting and feeling most of the time like a person haunted by a devil. I make no apologies to you for the conceit of what I am saying; it is what I think of myself, without caring what other people think. I know that I have a tremendous temperament, tremendous powers hidden within me, and they have got to come out.

When they do, the world will know what I know now.

Now Corydon, as you understand, I dream love absolute, and would scorn any other kind. I can master my passion, if it be that upon earth there is no woman willing or able to go with me to the last inch of my journey. I dream a life-companion to follow wherever my duty drives me; to feel all the desperateness of desire that I feel, to be stern and remorseless as I must be, wild and savage as I must be; to race through knowledge with me and to share my passion for truth with me; a woman with whom I need have no shame in the duty of my genius! As I tell you, if I marry you, I expect to give myself to you as your own heart; and then I think of the gentle and mild existence you have led!

It is very hard for me even to tell about my life, or to explain this thing that drives me mad. But I am writing this letter to you for the purpose of making clear to you that there are two alternatives before you, and that you must choose one or the other and stick by it, and bear the consequences. It is painful to me to think that I have fascinated you by what opportunities I have, even by what power and passion and talents I have, and filled you with a hunger for me--when really you do not realize at all what I am, or what I must be, and when what I have to do will terrify you. I write in the thought of terrifying you now, and making you give up this red-hot iron that you are trying to hold on to; or else to show you my life so plainly that never afterwards can you blame me, or shrink back except by your own fault.

You must not blame me for writing these words, for wondering if a woman, if any woman has power to stand what I need to do. And when I talk to you about giving me up, you must not think that is cold, but know that it is my faithfulness to my vision, which is the one thing to which I owe any duty in the world. Nor is it right that you should expect to be essential to me, when I have labored to be all to myself. You could become necessary to me in the years to come; if I marry you to-day I shall marry you for what you are to become, and for that alone--at any rate if I am true to myself.

If you are to be my wife you are to be my soul--to live my soul's life and bear its pain. You are to understand that I talk to you as I talk to myself, call you the names I call myself, and if you cry, give you up in disgust; that I am to deny you all pleasure as I do myself, and what God knows will be ten thousand times harder, let you take pleasure, and then spring up in the very midst of it--you know what I mean! That I am to be ever dissatisfied with you, ever inconsiderate of your feelings, and ever declaring that you are failing! That however much I may love you, I am to be your conscience, and therefore keep you--just about as you are now, miserable! You told me that you would gladly be whipped to learn to live; and this can be the only thing to happen to you.

You must understand why I act in this way. I am a weak and struggling man, with a thousand temptations; and when I marry you, you will be the greatest temptation of all. You are a beautiful girl, and I love you, and every instinct of my nature drives me to you; for me to live with you without kissing you or putting my arms about you, will remain always difficult. It will be so for you, as for me, and it will always be our danger, and always make us wretched. Your soul rises in you as I write this, and you say (as

you've said before) that if I offered to kiss you after it, it would be an insult. But only wait until we meet!

This is the one thing that has become clear to me: just as soon as there comes the least thought of satisfaction in our love, just so soon does it cease to satisfy my best self. You cannot satisfy my best self, you do not even know it; and if it were a question of that, I should never dream of marrying you! I love you for this and for this alone--because you are an undeveloped soul, the dream of whose infinite possibilities is my one delight in the matter. I think that you are perfect in character, that you are truth itself; and therefore, no matter how helpless you may be, I have no fear of failing to make you "all the world to me", provided only that I am not false to my ideal. You must know from what I have written before that I can love, that I do know what love is, and that you may trust me. I am not trying to degrade passion--I simply see how passion throws the burden on the woman, and therefore it is utterly a crime with us--the least thought of it! I ought to consider you as a school-girl, really just that; and instead of that I write you love letters!

I tell you there is nothing more hateful for me to look back upon than that childish business of ours, that time when we went upstairs that we might kiss each other unseen. I tell you, it revolts my soul, from love and from you! I should be perfectly willing to take all the blame--I do; only I have led you to like that (or to act as if you did) and I must stop it. Can you not understand how hateful it is to me to think of making you anything that I should be disgusted with?

I expect you to read over this letter until you realize that it is, every word of it, completely true and noble, and until you can write me so. You and I are to feel ourselves two school-children and live just so. It is not usual for school-children to marry, but that we dare upon the strength of our purpose, and in defiance of all counsel, and of every precedent. We are to feel that we owe our duty to our ideal; and that simply because of the strength and passion of our love for each other, we demand perfection, each of the other. My setting this stern challenge before you is nothing but my determination to give you my right love, to demand that you be a perfect woman.

I promise you therefore no quarter; I shall make no sacrifice of my ideal for your sake. As I wrote you, I mean to be absolutely one with you, and I expect you to be the same. You shall have (if you wish it) all of my soul--I shall live my life with you and think all my thoughts aloud--study to give you everything that I have. And God only, who knows my heart, knows what utter love for you lies in those words, what utter trust of you--how I think of you as being purity and holiness itself. To offer to take any other being into my soul, to lay bare all the secret places of it to its gaze, all the weaknesses as well as all the strength, and all that is vain as well as all that is sacred! You cannot know how I feel about my heart, but this you may know, that no one else has had a glimpse of it, you are the first and the last; and so sure am I of you that I dare to say it, all my life will I live in your presence, and trust to your sympathy and truth--and feel that I am false to love if I do not. If there were anything in my heart so foul that I feared to speak of it, I should give you that first, as the sacrifice of love;

or any vanity or foible--such things are really hardest to have others know, so great is our conceit.

If I could talk to you to-night, I should do just as I did up on the hill in the moonlight--frighten you, and make you wonder if there was any woman who wished to bear such a burden; and perhaps the saddest thing of all to me is that I do not bear it--instead I bear the gnawing of a conscience bitter and ashamed of itself. And could you bear that burden? For Corydon, as I look at myself to-night, I am before God, a coward and a dastard! I have not done my work! I have not borne the pain He calls me to bear, I have not wrested out the strength He put in my secret heart! And here I am chattering, talking about work to you! And these things are like a nightmare to me; they turn all my life's happiness to gall. And you are taking upon yourself this same burden--coming to help me to get rid of it. Or if you do not wish to, for God's sake, and mine, and yours, don't come near me--you have come too near as it is! Can you not see that when I am face to face with these fearful things--and you come and ask me to give my life to you, to worship you with the best faculties I possess--that I have no right to say yes?

You once told me you were happy because I called you "mein guter Geist, mein bess'res Ich"; well, you are not in the least that. The name that I give you, and that you may keep, is "the beautiful possibility of a soul". Remember a phrase I told you at the very beginning of our love, of the peril of "ceasing to love perfection and coming to love a woman." And read Shelley's sad note to "Epipsychidion"!

VIII

Dear Corydon:

You tell me in your last letter that you are leaving all who love you; and you ask "How do you know that because you love beauty, you will love me?"

I have been thinking a good deal about this; I do not believe, Corydon, that a man more haunted by the madness of desire ever lived upon earth than I. And when I get at the essence of myself, I do not believe that I am a kind man; I think that a person with less patience for human hearts never existed, perhaps with less feeling. There is only one thing in the world that I can be sure of, or that you can, my fidelity to my ideal! I know that however often I may fail or weaken, however many mistakes I may make, my hunger for the things of the soul will never leave me, and that night and day I shall work for them. I do not believe I have the right to promise you anything else, I have no right to dream of anything else; this is not my pleasure, as I feel it, it is a frenzy, it is that to which some blind and nameless and merciless impulse drives me. And I may try to persuade myself all my life that I love you, Corydon, and nothing else, and want nothing else; and all the time in the depths of my heart I hear these words from my conscience--"You are a fool." I love power, I love life, and seek them and strive for them, and care for nothing else and never have; and nothing else can satisfy me. And I cannot give any other love than this, any other promise.

IX

My dear Corydon:

I have been taking a walk this morning, thinking about us, and that I had treated you fearfully. The whole truth of it all is this--that I am so raw and so young and so helpless (and you are as much, if not more so) that I cannot, to save my life, be sure if my love for you is what it ought to be, or even if I could love any one as I ought. And I am so wretchedly dissatisfied! Do you know that for two weeks I have been trying to write a passage of my book--and before God, I _cannot!_ I have not the power, I have not the life!

Dear Corydon, it comes to me that you are _miserable_ to be in love with me--that I had no right to put this burden on your shoulders. I would say better things if I could, but I think that our marriage will be a setting out across a wild ocean in the dark! It is for you to be the heroine, to dare the voyage if you choose. These sound like wild words, but they are the truth of my life, and I dare not say any others. Can a girl who has been brought up in gentleness and sweetness, in innocence of life and of pain--can she say things, feel things like these?

X

Thyrsis:

God did not endow me with your tongue, or else it would not be the great effort it is to me to tell you some of the thoughts that have rushed through my mind in the last hour.

It is an hour since I began to read your letter of Horrible Truth. Now it seems to me it might have been in the last year, in the last century. Actually I feel like a stranger to myself; and my movements are very slow. First, I will tell you that I believe in God, oh, so implicitly--this thought gives me infinite hope. I long to let you know as much of my heart as I can, if I am to be your life-companion, as I firmly believe I am to be. I have such a strange calmness now, and I imagine that I must feel very much the way Rip Van Winkle did when he awoke. I want to try to show you my heart--it is right that I should try, is it not?

Know that I have placed much faith and trust in you, in anything that you did. If you opened one door to me and told me it led to the great and permanent truth, I believed you absolutely. If you hauled me back and put me through an opposite one, telling me that there my road lay, I believed you with equal faith. Now, now, at the end of an hour, I am, through you, convinced of one door, the only and true entrance; and I am as sure as I am that the sun is shining at this moment, that nothing in God's world can ever again make me lose sight of it. I have found that _you_ can lose sight of it, Thyrsis,--something shows me that I have in the last month been more right than you. Yes, I have, Thyrsis, though you may not know it. And the reason I couldn't stay right was because I am not strong enough to grasp my good impulses, and keep hold of them: because I have not enough faith in the soul within me.

I will try to tell you what I have felt since reading your letter. All is so disgustingly calm in me now. But listen, I believe I have had a little glimpse this afternoon of what it is to _feel_; and because of that knowledge I now am not afraid to tell you that I

claim something of God and life--that I can get it if you can. This has been very strong in me at moments, but, as I tell you, I have not yet learned to hold my glimpses of truth--they seem to come to me, and as quickly disappear.

I began to read your letter, and I cannot describe to you the convulsion that came over me. It seemed that I had the feeling of an empty skull on a desert; such a feeling--you can never have it! All the horror and despair! I tried to form my thoughts and tell myself it was not true. I tried to pray, and I did pray--out loud--and asked God to give me strength to read the letter.

I tried to use all the penetration I was capable of, to find out one thing, whether you were purely and unreservedly sincere in it. I wondered whether you really wished to live your life alone, but could not find the courage to tell me so. I firmly believe that no failure in the future, no disgust or helplessness, could ever bring me the complete anguish of those moments.

Can you realize what such a thing meant to me, Thyrsis?

Last spring, I had succeeded in bringing myself into an almost complete state of coma--I saw that I could do nothing, and because I would not endure such profitless pain I drugged myself to sleep. And you, you fiend, waked me up; and may your soul be thrice cursed if you have only pulled the doll to pieces _to see what it was made of!_ Know, you that have a soul which says it lives and suffers--that I can't go to sleep again! There is no joy for me in mother or father, in friends or admiration--I can tolerate nothing that I tolerated before you came with your cursed or blessed fire!

Also, if you do not marry me, or if I do not find some man who has your strength and desire for life, and who will take me and help me to learn, I shall die without having lived.--And I cried out in misery--only forty-two years, only forty-two little years, and I shall be an old woman of sixty! Only forty-two years in which to learn to live!

I believe if I had you here now I could almost strangle you. We may kill each other some day. I sometimes feel that there is nothing that will give me any relief, that I cannot breathe, I cannot support my body. But these are foolish and unprofitable feelings--and I believe I will yet be saved, if not by you, perhaps by myself. I think some heavenly aid came to me to-day. I asked for it, I simply said it _must_ come--and now I am able to bear myself and look around me, and say that the secret of my liberation is not death but life.

Please realize, Thyrsis, that I know you do not need me, that I cannot either entertain you or help you. My dear, do you not know that I have been conscious of this from the very beginning--and it has been this thought that has often made me worry, and doubt, and question. And then I have told myself that you had found _something_ in me to love; and that I also was very hungry to know about life and God; and that if you loved me enough to believe I was not dross, we might, with our untiring devotion--well, we might be right in going with each other. And now--would you rather I should tell you I will not marry you, be my desire, or effort, what it may? I do not know--even though I want to live so terribly. I have no word, no

proof to give!

And now, Thyrsis, I have no more strength to write. I only wish I had some power to make you know what I have felt this afternoon--I think if I could, you would have no more doubt of me. And I believe it is my God-given right not to doubt myself.

I will write no more--I have written enough to make you answer one of two things. "Come with me," or, "I would rather go alone." I know which one it will be, even now in my wretchedness. The sky is so blue this evening, and everything is so beautiful--and I am trying so hard to be right, to feel strong and confident!

XI

Dear Thyrsis:

I have just arisen. I woke in the middle of the night, and there was a spectre sitting by my bedside to frighten me; he succeeded at first, but I managed finally to get rid of him, and to find some peace. Many of your sentences came to me, and I was able to get behind the words, and I saw plainly that the letters were just what you should have written, and that they could not but benefit me. They have accomplished their purpose, I believe--they are burned into my soul, and have placed me rightly in our relation. I shall simply never trust the permission you may give me, in the future, to rest or be satisfied. I shall only hate you, for the pain of some of your words I shall never forget.

The memory of the first two pages of your letter will always put me in mortal terror of you. For the rest, I am very grateful, and I will try to show you how I love your ideal. I can never repay you as long as I live for letting me come with you. Oh Thyrsis, I am sure that I will never think or care whether you love me or not, if only I may go with you and learn how to strive!

I tore up all your love-letters this morning. I kept the last letter--though I do not think I could bear to read it over. I should be afraid of again going through with that despair. Oh, I beg for the time when I shall be obliged to waste none of my minutes--and when I shall have no opportunity of writing you! What time I have spent over your letters and mine!

XII

Dear Thyrsis:

I am restlessly waiting for the supper-bell to ring, and my head is aching intensely, and I am generally topsy-turvy. Alas! alas! the distance that separates us and our understanding!

I received a letter to-day while I was studying--but said I would not open it for a week, that I wanted strength to study. Well, I studied all the afternoon and found it none too easy. When I came home, I thought perhaps it was better to read your letter, which I grimly did.

Do you know, you are keeping me on the rack, literally on the rack, and my flesh and blood do not seem to be able to stand it--my body

seems to be the organ that first fails me, my brain is never so tired as my body. I love to think that you are not less merciful to me than you would be to yourself, I feel that you could not have used more cruel whips to yourself. Do you suppose that any disgust, scolding, or malediction to me could, as your wife, hurt me, as your doubt of me hurts me now?

And I just begin to read your letter again, and I tell you, you are a fool. You say you do not know whether you could love any one as you ought--well, I, with all my weakness, know whether I can love, and I love you a thousand times more than you have given me cause to. And you are so hungry! Will you always starve because you are blind? As to being satisfied, how could you be? But you say you will love me as much as I deserve. How much do I deserve--do you know? I sometimes cry out against you and long to get hold of you. If you have genius, why doesn't it give you some inkling whether you are a man with a heart, not only a stupid boy? And then I see it all plainly, or think I do, and know that you are trying so hard to be right towards us, because you think you love me the way other people love; and you know if I am weak, it would degrade your genius; and you cannot be sure of my character or strength. You cannot know whether I realize the life I am selecting--you have found it hard, and you have every reason to think that I will find it ten times harder; and you love me in a way that is not the highest,--but yet you love me enough, thank God, to tell me the whole truth!

I have come to a pass where I can say to myself with truth, that I do not care how much or how little you love me. That depends upon you, as well as myself. I believe the time will come, when you will love me as you ought, and I say this in perfect calm conviction, in all my weakness, and with all my maudlin habits clinging to me. Strangely enough your doubt of me has made me rise up in arms to champion my cause, or else I should lie down forever in the dust, and deny my God.

I wonder whether it is my love for you that makes me believe? I cling to you, as a mother might cling to her child; I cling to you as the embodiment, the promise, of all I will ever find true in life. I look to live in you, to fulfil all my possibilities in you, and if you die or forsake me, all my hope is gone, and I am dead. This is a letter in which I have no scorn or doubt, or ridicule of myself, as formerly.

And then you ask me, "Can a girl brought up in gentleness and sweetness, and innocence of life and of pain, can she say things, feel things like these?" It is the gentleness and sweetness and innocence that are galling to me. I can tolerate no more of them. They have warped me, they have given me no chance. But I have had some pain in my life, and since I have known you I have known more about pain and what it brings, and leaves.--And now I am feeling ill, and I cannot control that. Oh, God!

XIII

Dearest Corydon:

I have a chance to finish the first part of my book to-day, and save myself from Hades; and here I am writing to you--just a line. (Of course it turned out to be six pages!)

Your last letter was very noble; I can only say to you, that the treatment which makes you upbraid me is not done for my sake; that the life which I live is not lived for my sake. You say perhaps you are better than I; it is very possible--I often think so myself; but that is nothing to the point. I should be very wretched if I sat down to think what I am. Oblige me by being better than my ideal--if you can! You must understand, dearest, that behind all that I am doing, there is truth to the soul; and that truth to the soul is love, and the only love. I am seeking for nothing but the privilege of treating you as myself; and rest assured, that if I treat you any differently it will be better than I treat myself! There is no peril in our life except that!

Some day you will understand that I can sometimes feel about myself that I am utterly hateful, utterly false, utterly shallow and bad; and that to get away from myself would be all that I desire in life. I cannot imagine my having such opinion of you; but some dissatisfaction--just a little--I may have. Only let us love perfection, you and I, with all our souls, and I think our love for each other may safely be allowed to take care of itself. Remember the two ships in Clough's poem, which parted, but sailed by the compass, and reached the same port.

I shall spend no more time comforting you about this.

And dear Corydon, when you are angry at my doubting your power, and say that I do not know you, I can only reply--Why of course I don't, and neither do you. You find your own self out little by little--why get angry with me because I don't know it until you tell me? You are a grown woman compared to what you were three months ago; and this character that you ask me to know--well, it takes years of hard labor to prove a character.

XIV

Dearest Corydon:

Do you ever realize how much faith in you I have? As utterly different is your whole life, as if you had been in another world; and through all the wilderness that I have travelled, I hope to drag you. But I cannot carry you, or take you; I must trust in the frenzy of your grip upon me. There is nothing else you could have that I would trust. You might be wonderfully clever and wonderfully wise--and I could do nothing with you. Do you remember Beethoven's saying, that he would like to take a certain woman, if he had time, and marry her and break her heart, so that she might be able to sing?

Ah dear heart, I wish you could read in my words what I feel! I wonder if I am dreaming when I live in this ideal of what a woman's love can be--so complete and so utter a surrender, so complete a forgetting, a losing of the self, so complete a living in another heart! I am not afraid to ask just this from a woman--from you! For I have enough heart's passion to satisfy every thirst that you may feel. Ah, Corydon, I want you! I am drunk with the thought of making a woman to love. I wonder if any man ever thought of that before! Artists go about the world with the great hunger of their hearts, and expecting to find by chance another soul like the one

they have spent years in making beautiful and swift and strong; but has anyone ever thought that instead of writing books that no one understands, he might be making another kind of an artwork--one that would be alive, and with sacred possibilities of its own?

XV

DEAR THYRSIS:

Your last letters have been very beautiful. I see one thing--though you inform me that you believe you are a hard man, your natural gentleness and sympathy of heart would be the ruin of both of us in the future if I would permit it. But I think you can trust me, not ever as long as I live to lead you into weakness. My desperateness, before I received your letter saying that I might come with you, was rather dreadful; it made me doubt myself, for it was so difficult to keep myself from going to pieces. I have been wicked enough, to wonder whether I could ever make you feel as I felt for two days--if I could only bring to your heart that one pang, the only real one I ever felt in my life! But it taught me one thing, that the only road toward realization of life and one's self is through suffering. I found out that I could bear, for it seems to me as I look back at that horrible nightmare, that it was almost by a superhuman effort I was able to read the letter at all. But enough of that!

I think I have effectually cured myself of any weak yearning for your love. I go to you in gratefulness, knowing what I lack and what you need. Anything my love can do for you, it shall do. It may have some power--I sometimes think that it could have more than you realize.

I suppose every woman has thought that the man she loved was her very life, but I do not think it of you, I simply know it. I must go with you, whether I loved you or not.

Meanwhile my love has assumed a strength to me that I never felt before. I don't know how my wild and incoherent letters have affected you, but there were many times when I longed to get hold of you, literally, and simply shake into you some recognition of my soul. Oh, I am afraid you couldn't get away from me; the more merciless you are to me, the wilder I get.

I am possessed by so many opposite moods and influences. I am afraid of you a little. I never know what you are going to do to me.

I feel, I cannot help but feel, that I am part of your life, now, you could not neglect me any more than you could your own soul. I consider you just as responsible for mine as you are for your own. I say this with no doubts, but know that it is true, and you must know it.

XVI

DEAR THYRSIS:

You certainly have a wonderful task in store for me, and I pray God to give me strength for it. I can see very plainly that you expect to find the essence of my soul better than yours, because it seems that you are making my task harder than yours.

Do you know, I have actually found myself asking, at times, with a certain defiant rage--if you were actually going to give love to your princess before you had made her suffer! So far you have not made her suffer at all. I had become quite excited over this idea --though perhaps I had no right to. I suppose it is all right, because she is an imaginary person, and you can endow her with all the perfections you please. She is triumphant and thrilling, and worthy of love--whereas I am just little Corydon, whom you have known all your life, and who is stupid and helpless, and impossible to imagine romances about! Is that the way of it?

XVII

MY DEAREST THYRSIS:

A long letter has just come to me. I always receive your letters with many palpitations, and by the time I get through reading, my cheeks are flaming. It is too bad it takes letters so long to go to and fro.

I have finally come to bear the attitude towards myself, that I would to a naughty child. I will have no nonsense, and all my absurdities and inefficiencies must be cured. I think I have come to know myself a little better within the last few days. I know that I have no right to quick victories, or any happiness at all, even your love. I tell you truly, if it were only possible, I would go away this minute--do you hear?--oh! to some lonely place, and then I would do something with myself. I want to be alone, alone--I want to be face to face with myself, and God, if possible! I have come to the conclusion that I can do anything I must do. I think (I am not sure) I could give you up, if I were obliged to, and go away by myself and try alone. If I do not have you, I must have solitude.

XVIII

MY DEAREST CORYDON:

Thinking about my work this morning, and how hard it was, and how much strength it would take, my thoughts turned to you, and I discovered, as never before, just how I like to think of you. It seemed to me that you were part of the raw material that I had to use; that I had mastered you, and was going to make you what you had to be. And there woke in my heart at those words a fierceness of purpose that I had never felt in my life before--I was quite mad with it; and you cried out to escape me, but I would not let you go, but held you right tightly in my arms. And so--I do not mean to let you go! I shall bear you away with me, and make you what I wish. And the promise of marriage that I make you is just this: not that I love you--I do not love you; but what I wish the woman to be whom I am to love--that I will make you!

And do not ever dare to ask me for any other promise, for you will not get it. You will come with this.

XIX

MY THYRSIS:

I had an iron grip at my heart just now, as I was trying to study. I had a foreboding of something--and then I came home and found your letter telling me I was yours, and I must. At last I may go to you the way I wish! My love, my love, I do not care what you are, or what you do to me, as long as I may go with you.

How I laugh at myself as I say it! You have mastered me to worship your life--not you. I shall not work for your love, I shall work to live. Our love will be one of the incidents of our life. Meanwhile, I may go with you, that is all that I say--I sing it. I may go with you, not to happiness, but to necessity!

And now that cursed German! It hangs over my head like a sword of Damocles I have heard of--though I don't know why it was held over his head!

You think our love was settling into the cooing state! Dear me, Thyrsis, I hope I will not always have to yell to you over a foggy ocean!

XX

DEAR THYRSIS:

Can you imagine what it must be to be shut up in a little room on a rainy night, with the children and people screaming under your window? That is my position now.

I find myself hard to manage at times. I want to become discouraged or melancholy or disgusted, but I drive myself better than I used to. I even was happy a little for a few moments to-night. I was playing one of my piano-pieces, and I found myself imagining all sorts of things. But this happens very seldom, and only lasts for a moment. I often wonder at myself. Two months ago I did not love you one particle; I love you now, so that--so that it is impossible for me to do anything else. In fact I did not realize how much I loved you until that terrible moment when I read you did not love me. I saw how impossible it will be to cease to love you, no matter what you do to me. I do not know why it is; I simply know it is, and perhaps some day I may teach you how to love. I do not imagine you know how very well, at present--no, Thyrsis, I don't.

I know your true self now, and I love it better than ever I loved the other. I say it with a certain grimness. I know you, your real self, and I love it.

Know, oh, my Beloved, that in the last three months you have grown to me from a boy into a man, into my husband! When I think of you as you were at first you seem a child compared to what you are now.

XXI

DEAREST LOVE:

Last night, as I went to sleep, I was thinking of you and our problem, and there were all sorts of uncertainties; but one thing I have to tell you, my Corydon--that it came to me how sweet and true, and how pure and good you have been; and I loved you very, very much indeed. I thought: I should like to tell her that, and ask

her always to be so noble and unselfish. Can you not realize how all your deficiencies are as nothing to me, in the sight of that one unapproachable perfection? For my Corydon is all devotion and love, and pure, pure, maiden goodness! And there is quite a whole heart full of feeling for you in that, and I wish I had you here to tell you.

XXII

MY CORYDON:

I am coming more and more to realize myself, and what is the single faculty I have been given. I think of a dear clergyman friend I used to have, and I realize what a loving heart is--what it is to delight in a human soul for its own sake, and to be kind to it, fond of it. And I know that there could not be a man with less of that than I have. Certainly I know this, I never did love a soul for its own sake, and don't think I could. I love beauty, and truth, and power, and I hate everything else, if it come across my way. If I had to live the life of that clergyman friend I should be insane in a month. I see this as something very hateful; but there is only one thing I can do, to see that I hate my own self more than I hate any other self--and work, work, for the thing I love.

You asked me once to tell you if your death would make any difference to me. If you were to die to-morrow I should feel that a sacred opportunity was gone out of my life, that all my efforts must have less result forever after. But I do not think I should stop working a day.

I love you because you are something upon which I may exert the force of my will. I honestly believe that the truest word, the nearest to my character, I ever spoke. If I care about you it is for one thing, and one only--because you are a soul hungry for life, because you are capable of sacrifice and high effort, because you are sensitive and eager. I love you and honor you for this; I take you to my bosom, I give all my life to your service; and I shall make you a perfect woman, or else kill you.

You must understand what I want; I want no concrete thing, no dozen languages to throw you into despair. I want effort, effort, effort! That's all. And I believe that you might be a stronger soul than I at this moment, if only you chose to hunt yourself out and fight! That is truly what I feel about you, and that is why I love you.

XXIII

DEAREST THYRSIS:

I have no more to say, my precious one; I bow in joy before your will, your certainty, your power. Let it be so, I shall adore you as I so long to do.

You are giving me all I could ask for. What more could I wish from you, dear Thyrsis, than to know you will never leave my side? I will try not to do any more bemoaning of my shortcomings. To-night I reached a wonderful security and almost sublimity, until I could have fallen on my face and praised God for His mercy. I talked out

loud to myself, I exhorted myself, I explained to myself what is my beauty and possibility in life--the reason for which I was born. I was quite lifted out of myself, by a conviction that came like a benediction, that the essence of my soul was good and pure, and that if anybody upon earth had the power to reach God, it was myself.

Dear God, how I have spent the years of my life! like an imbecile! But you--if you take me, I shall go mad--I shall love you like a tigress! I shall implore you to invent any way that will enable me to realize life! Oh, if you take me, how madly I shall love you! I fancy myself seeing you now, and I don't know what I should do--I love you so dreadfully! I think of you, and everything about you seems so wondrously beautiful to me!

I almost have a feeling that I have no right to love you so much. Oh, tell me, do you want me to love you as I can? Already you seem part of me, mine--mine! And it is wonderful how you help me.

XXIV

Thyrsis:

I spent the whole day in the park without a bite to eat, because I did not want to take the trouble to come home after it, and I only had five cents. I have tried, oh, tried to control myself and make myself saner. I am seized with occasional fits of the horrors, and of wild cravings for you, until I could scream. It is so unbearable, and I almost want to die. Oh, but I do not want to die! My imagination has become so fevered in the last few days--if I do not see you soon, I know not what will become of me!

I have never loved you so wildly--though I have always longed for you. I sometimes feel now as if my brain were utterly wrecked. I know not what is the matter; I gasp, when I think of you. I am convinced of heaven and hell almost in the same breath--experience each in rapid succession. One touch of your hand and one look, I think would cure me. I seem as if in a thunder-storm--pitchy blackness with flashes of light--and in the flashes I see you, my beloved!

XXV

Thyrsis:

I am atrociously weary of being able to depend upon myself not at all; but oh, how marvellously sweet and good you are to me! I shall never be able to pay you for your help!

Dear Heaven, what a cup of bitterness I have drunk, since I last saw you! Dearest, you have really torn me to pieces, unwittingly. But now I am healed, and I may go on in your blessed sight, with my terrors gone forever.

And then I actually wonder if you have an earthly form! It will be very strange to see you and touch you, I sometimes wake up with a start at the thought of it!

XXVI

Thyrsis:

Here I am, the most restless and miserable and uncomfortable and pining of creatures--a very Dido! Are you satisfied, now that you have made it almost impossible for me to put my mind on anything but you, you? I spend hours reading one page of my book.

I was reading peaceably just now, and I suddenly thought how I would feel if I saw you coming in at the door. I started and could hardly believe that I will really see you--in something besides visions. When night comes I usually get fidgety, and can hardly realize I do not need to worry over phantoms. Then I go on with "Classicism and Romanticism in Music," and I think of you--and read a line and think of you! You see, it doesn't do for me to be too intense, for I just devour myself, and that is all. My only idea of a vent is to knock my head against something.

I suppose it is the inevitable result of caring for someone you cannot see. Here I might be studying now, but what do I do? I go around seeking rest--and I write you a dozen times a day, and use up all the stamps in the house.

Oh well, I dare say if you wished me to love you, you have accomplished your purpose most successfully. There is nothing in life but you, and to suddenly acquire a new self is most startling, and something hard to believe. Thyrsis, I simply cannot realize that I may go to you and find peace and security.

XXVII

MY DEAREST CORYDON:

I have just a few words to say. I have two weeks left in which to shake off my shoulders the fearful animal that has been tearing me. _For just three weeks to-day,_ not a line written!

The task seems almost beyond my powers. God, will people ever know how I have worked over this book!

But unless you develop some new doubt, or I persist in writing letters, I ought to get it done now. I shall see you as soon as I have finished, and meantime I shall write no letters.

XXVIII

DEAR THYRSIS:

I would give a great deal to let you know how I have struggled and suffered.

I have had almost _more_ than I could bear--the more horrible because the more unreasonable. You must know it. If it disturbs you, please put the letter away until a favorable time. I account my trouble greatly physical--I have never been in such a nervous state. The murky despair that has come over me--that I have writhed and struggled in, as in the clutches of some fiend! It seems to me I have experienced every torment of each successive stage of Dante's Inferno. I know what is the emotion of a soul in all the bloom and hope of youth, condemned _to die_.

I woke up in the middle of the night last night--and felt as if a monster sat by to throw a black cloth over me and smother me. I got up and shook myself, and my heart was beating violently.

I managed to get myself free. This morning I am better. God in Heaven only knows--I would rather be torn limb from limb, yes, honestly, than endure the blackness of soul that I have had through all these years of strife and failure by myself.

Dearest Thyrsis:

Perhaps if I have written to you a few words, I shall be able to put my mind on study--as so far I have not done. I actually to-night have been indulging in all sorts of romantic moods about you. I felt in a singing mood, and when I came up from dinner I put on a beautiful dress, just for fun, and I looked quite radiant. I dreamed of you, and imagined that you were at my feet, in true Romeo fashion--and I was your Juliet. I imagined--I couldn't help thinking of this, and I knew I ought to be doing something else! Oh, but how I want a poor taste of joy! You were my Romeo to-night--you were beautiful and young and loving; and well, I had one dream of youth and happiness before my miseries begin.

I have felt that we were very near to each other lately. You have shown me the tenderness of your heart, and I love you quite rapturously. I love your goodness, your sympathy--perhaps when I see you I can tell you!

XXX

DEAREST THYRSIS:

I received a postal just now, saying that you were coming soon. I had my usual queer faintness. It was like receiving word from the dead--it seemed such centuries--aeons--since I heard from you! I send you this batch of notes I have written you at various times, a sort of mental itinerary, for my mind has traveled into all sorts of queer places, back and forth. I tell you that without your continual influence, I am lost in doubt and uncertainty. Please try to understand these notes and my fits of love and fear.

XXXI

DEAR THYRSIS:

I am in one of my cast-iron moods, this morning--in a fighting mood, I do not care with whom or what. You, even you, have not altogether understood me--you have often given me a dog's portion. I have been a slave, a cowering kitten before you, and you (unwittingly I know) have done much to destroy all my courage and hope and love--by what you call making me aware of your higher self. Fortunately I know what your higher self is, quite as well as you do, if not a little better--and I know that it is the self that most strengthens my love and courage, the self that most fills me with life. I have a right to life as well as you, and a right to the love in you that most inspires me. I feel I am capable of judging this, in spite of all my lack of education, and my inability to follow you in your intellectual life.

I have thought lately that you were able to make yourself believe that you were anything you wished to think yourself. Whenever you wring my heart and deprive me of strength, I shall go somewhere alone, and when I have controlled myself, come back to you.

You say you are master--but it must be master of the right. I want strength, and why you should think it right ever to have helped to throw me into more despair, I do not know. The reason I have written all this is because such ideas have come to me lately, and a fear that sometimes you might resort to your unloving methods, with the thought of its being right. I tell you I would rather stay at home, than ever go through with some of the pangs you have cost me, in what you called your higher moods. You must not gainsay me, that I am also capable of respecting high moods and bowing before them; but it would seem to me that they are only high if they are a source of inspiration and joy to me.

Because we love each other, would that be any reason why we must dote upon each other, or sink from our high resolves? I cannot see why our love for each other should not always be a means of our reaching our higher selves. You need not answer this letter--but when you come back, tell me whether what I say impresses you as being right or wrong--if there is not some justification in it. But perhaps I should wait. I have no right to disturb you now.

XXXII

THYRSIS:

I woke up this morning with the feeling that I did not love you. That same thing has happened to me two or three times, and I do not understand it.

It must be because at the present moment you do not love _me!_ You are writing your book, and telling yourself that you cannot love me as you ought! Is this so? It is only a surmise on my part, and I do not know, but I should not be surprised if you were. I only know that the one thing that can bring us together is love, and I do not love you now. Perhaps you can explain it to me. I write this absolutely without emotion.

I tell you there have been things horribly wrong about you. You have done anything but inspire love in my heart--you have never seen me with love in my heart. Until lately, I never have felt any love for you; before, I simply compelled myself to think I loved you, because my life seemed to depend upon it. There have been many times when, as I look back, you seem to me to have been base.

Well may you preach, while you are alone, and are monarch of yourself. I shall have to have more of a chance than has ever come to me, before I will bear your displeasure or your exhortations. If you come to me and speak to me of the high, proud self that I must reach, every vestige of love for you will leave my heart, and I would as soon marry a stone pillar!

Great Heaven, what strange moods I have! I picture our meeting each other, unmoved by love; you determined, energetic, indifferent to all things, myself included; and I disappointed, but with a hardness

in my heart--no tears!

I am indulging now in the most lifeless and gloomy of broodings; if you do not come back to me, the only soul I can love, if you are not joyful and strong, sincere, sympathetic, and loving, all of these--I shall know it is a farce for me to ever hope to gain any life with you. I do not believe that any woman can grow without love, and a great deal of it. Why do you suppose I am writing all this--I, who have felt such deep and true love for you? I have no courage--the dampness of the day has settled into my soul--and I shall be joyless until there is no more cursed doubt of you and your love for me.

XXXIII

Dear Corydon: Against resolutions, I am writing to you again. I thought of you--there is a boat up the lake to-day with some hunters, and if I finish this letter, I can send it in by them as they pass. I have many things to tell you, and you must think about them.

This is one of my paralyzing letters. It will reach you Monday. I can't tell where I may be then. I have been wrestling with the end of the book, and I am wild with rage at my impotence. The fact has come to me that no amount of will is enough, because all my life is cowardly and false. I have found myself wanting to sneak through this work, and come home and enjoy myself; and you can't sneak with God, and that's all. I cannot come home beaten, and so here I am, still struggling--and with snow on the ground, and the shack so cold that I sit half in the fire-place.

I think of you, and at times when my soul is afire, I imagine I can do anything. I see that you are helpless, but I think that I can change your whole being, and make you what I wish. But then that feeling dies out, and I think of you as you are, and with despair. I do not allude to any of your "deficiencies"--music, learning, and other stuff. I mean your life-force, or your lack of it. I see that you have learned nothing of the unspeakable, unattainable thing for which I am panting. And it has come to me that I dare not marry you, that I should be binding my life to ruin. My head is surging with plans, and a whole infinity of future, and I simply cannot carry any woman with me on this journey.

As I say this, I see the tears of despair in your eyes. I can only tell you what I am--God made me for an artist, not a lover! I have not deep feelings--I do not care for human suffering; I can work, that is all. Art is no respecter of persons, and neither am I--I labor for something which is not of self, and requires denial of self. And as I think about you, the feeling comes to me that it is not this you want, that I should make you utterly wretched if I married you. You love love; you do not wish to fling yourself into a struggle such as my life must be. I see that in all your letters--your terror of this highest self of mine. If you married me, you would have to fight a battle that would almost kill you. You would have to wear your heart out, night and day--you would have to lose yourself and your feelings--fling away everything, and live in self-contempt and effort. You would have to know it--I can't help it--that I love life, and that to human hearts I owe no allegiance; that to me they are simply impatience and vexation.

Do you want such a life? If you can learn to love it for what it is--a wild, unnatural, but royal life--very well. If you are coming to me with pleading eyes, secretly wishing for affection, and in terror of me when you don't get it, then God help you, that is all!

You are a child, and you can not dream what I mean. But every day I learn something more of a great savage force of mine, that will stand out against the rest of this world, that is burning me up, that is driving me mad. One of two things it will do to you--it will make you the same kind of creature, or it will tear the soul out of you. Do you understand that? And nothing will stop it--it cares for nothing in the world but the utterance of itself! And if you wish to marry me, it will be with no promise of mine save to wreak it upon you! To take you, and make you just such a creature, kill or cure--nothing else! Not one instant's patience--but just one insistent, frantic demand that you succeed--and fiery, writhing disgust with you when you do not succeed--disgust that will make you scream--and make you live! Do you understand this--and do you get any idea of the temper behind this? And how it seems to you, I don't know--it is the only kind of truth I am capable of; I shall simply fling naked the force of my passionate, raging will, and punish you with it each instant of your life--until you understand it, and love it, and worship it, as I do.

Now, I don't know what you will think about this letter--and I don't care. It is here--and you must take it. It does not come to you for criticism, any more than it would come for criticism to the world. It will rule the world. If I marry you I must live all my soul before you, and you must share it; if you think you can do this without first having suffered, having first torn loose your own crushed self, you are mistaken. But remember this--I shall demand from you just as much fire as I give; you may say you cannot, you may weep and say you cannot--I will gnash my teeth at you and say you must.

Perhaps I'm a fool to think I can do this. At any rate, I don't want to do anything else; I am a fool to think of doing anything else, and you to let me.

I cannot be false to my art without having a reaction of disgust, and you cannot marry me, unless you understand that. When I sat down to this letter I called myself mad for trying to tie my life to yours. Now I am interested in you again. You may wish to make this cast still; and oh, of course I shall drop back as usual, and you'll be happy, and I'll be your "Romeo"!

Ugh--how I hated that letter! "Romeo" indeed! Wouldn't we have a fine sentimental time--you with your prettiest dress on, and I holding you in my arms and telling you how much I loved you!

XXXIV

MY DEAR THYRSIS:

I shall be your wife. This thought takes hold of me firmly and calmly, and I have no tears, nor fright, nor uncertainty. I suffered, of course, while I read your letter, and my self-control toppled, but no "tears of despair" came into my eyes. I am not despairing--I shall be your wife, and I shall feel that for many

years one of my greatest efforts will be to prevent you from becoming my "Romeo." I am very weak and human, and you become that easily--do you know it?

Rejoice, I have gained my self-control, and well, I am going to be your wife. Or else (it comes to me quite as a matter of course, without any feeling of it being unnatural or unusual) I shall not care to live. But after all, I do not fear that I shall die--I shall be your wife. You may even gainsay it, you may even tell me I shall ruin your life, you may even tell me that you refuse to take me--but sooner or later I shall be your wife. I say it with perfect certainty, and almost composure.

It is unfortunate that at such a time as this I cannot see you--it is quite cruelly wicked. There is so much to say, not all in your favor either. Some day I shall learn to bring out and keep before me that higher self of yours, which now I do not fear. I also have a higher self, though it does not show itself very often. It is a self which can meet that self of yours without flinching, but which loves it, and stretches out its arms to it--which knows that without that self of yours it cannot, will not live. It is hard to realize such a thing, but I beseech you no longer, I am going with you. You see now, I have no fear of your not taking me--I simply have no fear of this.

If I had, I could not write you this way. But you have been the means of showing me I can awaken, and that I was not meant to live the life of the people around me. Chance tried hard to put me to sleep forever, but you have roused me. Dear me, how I smile to myself at my confidence! But I am so sure--this feeling would not be in my heart if it had no meaning! I was not meant for this life I am leading. I am not afraid because I have no proof that I am a genius, and no prospect of being one at present. I do not know whether what you have must come as an inspiration direct from God, I do not know whether I am capable of winning any of this life that you are seeking; but I do know this--I'm going to have the chance to try, and you are going to give it to me. Do you suppose I could tell you that I am willing to stay at home and let you leave me?

I have not even any fear now of your wishing to leave me. Why, I wouldn't hold my life at a pennyworth if you were out of it!

"You are my only means of breathing, you fool," I thought. I sometimes wonder how you could think of leaving me, when I feel as I do at present. I ask myself why it is that you know nothing of it, and why it does not make you put out your hand in gladness to me--how you could write me that all my letters showed you I did not want to struggle to lead your life!

My words are failing me now--this is probably the reason you know nothing about me.

Besides, when I have written you before this, I have been worrying and doubting and afraid. I am none of these now; and I do not believe I am deluding myself--in fact I know I am not. I shall be your wife. It is indeed a pity I cannot talk to you now--yes, a very great pity. It is also rather incomprehensible, that you can imagine leaving me now. And all my letters have told you that I wish to be petted and cuddled, did they? If you were here, I do not

know that it would do any good to give my feelings vent, it would profit me nothing to strike you, and what could I do? I cannot hate you--it is not natural that one should hate one's husband.

Some day, oh, some day, I tell myself--you will no longer play and trifle with me and my soul!

Did you really think you are going to put me to sleep again? Surely my life is something; and you have given me some reason for its existence. I can hardly tell you what I wish to say; people run in and out, and I am bothered--I suppose this is one of my tasks. But do you not see that you have taken the responsibility of a soul into your hands? I cannot live without you. What is it--do creatures go around the world struggling and saying they must live, and are they only pitiful fools for trying?

And are you one of God's chosen ones? Will you tell me, "Corydon, you simply cannot live my life--you are not fit?" Dear Thyrsis, I actually believe that if you should tell me that now, I should laugh with joy, for I would see that I had gained one victory, that of proving to you your own weakness and stupidity. And I should not let you discourage me. I should throw my arms around your neck, and cling to you until you had promised to take me. After all, it is a small boon to ask the privilege of trying to live, it cannot but be a glory to you to help me; and if I do not make you waste your time or money, how can I hinder you?

Ask yourself how you have treated me--have I not suffered a little? Though I may have been miserably weak, have I not now a little courage? Why do the moments blind you so, that you can speak to me as though I were a sawdust doll?

There is only one thing that I will let myself do. I know that you are strong and brave, and that I can be if I go with you; and I am going with you--there simply is no other alternative--for I love you! Yes, dear, I saw it very plainly as I read your letter to-day. I seem to feel very differently about it all now. I know we cannot sit still and love each other--this costs me no pang. You need not love me one bit; I may simply belong to you, we may simply belong to each other.

I see how I fall into blindness of the high things at home. How almost impossible it is for me to do anything, while I have the earthly ties of love! I study--but how? How is it possible to live the physical life of other people--to be sympathetic and agreeable and conciliatory, and gain anything for your own soul? How is such a creature as myself to get what it wants, unless it goes away where there are no contrary and disturbing influences--where it has no ties, no obligations? The souls that have won, how did they do it--did they go alone, or did they stay in the parlor and serve tea?

Such thoughts as these would make me grovel at your feet, if need be, in an agony of prayer. The means, I cry--and you are the means! What is there for me, then, but to beseech you to have faith in me? I suppose, as yet, you have little or no cause--though once or twice I have risen to you, even though perhaps you did not know it. I am almost happy now--for I feel that this useless strife is at an end, this craving and wondering if you wish to leave me. And for all that, I despise you, too--for your blind and wanton cruelty in

wishing to crush what you have created! How do you expect God to value your soul, when you so lightly value mine?

But after all, will it help me to beseech you? The thing I honor in you is your desire to be right--and I know that you will act toward me as your sense of right prompts you. You will act toward me as you feel you must do, to be true. Yes, be true to yourself, please; I am happy to trust in yourself so. If you believe that I will mar your life, I do not wish to go I with you. I do not know why, but I feel that something has come to me to prevent my despair from returning; I shall take care of my soul--there must be something for me in this life. I have a feeling that perhaps you will think I am writing this last mute acceptance of your will, without knowing what I am doing. But I know that I shall struggle without you, I shall not die.

And I wish that you would do one thing--see me as soon as you can; let it be early in the morning, and it shall be decided on that day whether I am to marry you or not. I shall leave you, not to see you again--or knowing that I am to be your wife. I am sick unto death of fuming and sighing, tears and fears.

What will you do, Thyrsis? I cannot write any more.

I unfold the letter again. What, in the name of God, are you going to do?_

BOOK IV

THE VICTIM APPROACHES

A silence had fallen upon them. She sat watching where the light of the sun flickered among the birches; and he had the book in his hand, and was turning the pages idly. He read--

"I know these slopes; who knows them if not I?"

And she smiled, and quoted in return--

"Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful time,
Here was thine height of strength, thy golden prime!
And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields."

Section 1. It was early one November afternoon, in his cabin in the forest, that Thyrsis wrote the last of his minstrel's songs. He had not been able to tell when it would come to him, so he had made no preparations; but when the last word was on the paper, he sprang to his feet, and strode through the snow-clad forest to the nearest farm-house. The farmer came with a wagon, and Thyrsis bundled all his belongings into his trunk, and took the night-train for the

city.

He came like a young god, radiant and clothed in glory. All the creatures of his dreams were awake within him, all his demons and his muses; he had but to call them and they answered. There was a sound of trumpets and harps in his soul all day; he was like a man half walking, half running, in the midst of a great storm of wind.

He had fought the good fight, and he had conquered. The world was at his feet, and he had no longer any fear of it. The jangling of the street-cars was music to him, the roar and rush of the city stirred his pulses--this was the life he had come to shape to his will!

And so he came to Corydon, glorious and irresistible. His mind was quite made up--he would take her; he was master now, he had no longer any doubts or fears. He was thrilled all through him with the thought of her; how wonderful it was at such an hour to have some one to communicate with--some one in whose features he could see a reflection of his own exaltation! He recollected the words of the old German poet--

"Der ist selig zu begrussen Der ein treues Herze weiss!"

He went to Corydon's home. In the parlor he came upon her unannounced; and she started and stared at him as at a ghost. She did not make a sound, but he saw the pallor sweep over her face, he saw her tremble and sway. She was like a reed shaken by the wind--so fragile and so sensitive! He got a sudden sense of the storm of emotion that was shaking her; and it frightened him, while at the same time it thrilled him strangely.

He came and took her hands in his, and gently touched her cheek with his lips. She stared at him dumbly.

"It's all right, sweetheart," he whispered. "It's all right." And she closed her eyes, and it seemed as if to breathe was all she could do.

"Come, dearest," he said. "Let us go out."

And half in a daze she put on her hat and coat, and they went out on the street. He took her arm to steady her.

"Well?" she asked.

"It's all right, dearest," he said.

"You got my letter?"

"Yes, I got it. And it was a wonderful letter. It couldn't have been better."

"Ah!"

"And there's no more to be said. There's no refusing such a challenge. You shall come with me."

"But Thyrsis! Do you want me to come?"

"Yes," he said, "I want you."

And he felt a tremor pass through her arm. He pressed it tightly to his side. "I love you!" he whispered.

"Ah Thyrsis!" she exclaimed. "How you have tortured me!"

"Hush, dear!" he replied. "Let's not think of that. It's all past now. We are going on! You have proven your grit. You are wonderful!"

They went into the park, and sat upon a bench in the sun.

"I've finished the book!" he said. "And in a couple more days it'll be copied. I've a letter of introduction to a publisher, and he wrote me he'd read it at once."

"It seems like a dream to me," she whispered.

"We won't have to wait long after that," he said. "Everything will be clear before us."

"And what will you do in the meantime?" she asked.

"Mother wants me to stay with her," he said. "I've only got ten dollars left. But I'll get some from the publisher."

"Are you sure you can?" she asked.

"Oh, Corydon!" he cried, "you've no idea how wonderful it is--the book, I mean. You'll be amazed! It kept growing on me all the time--I got new visions of it. That was why it took me so long. I didn't dare to appreciate it, while I was doing it--I had to keep myself at work, you know; but now that it's done, I can realize it. And oh, it's a book the world will heed!"

"When can I see it, Thyrsis?"

"As soon as it's copied--the manuscript is all a scrawl. But you know the minstrel's song at the end? My Gethsemane, I called it! I found a new form for it--it's all in free verse. I didn't mean it to be that way, but it just wrote itself; it broke through the bars and ran away with me. Oh, it marches like the thunder!"

He pulled some papers from his coat-pocket. "I was going over it on the train this morning," he said. "Listen!"

He read her the song, thrilling anew with the joy of its effect upon her. "Oh, Thyrsis!" she cried, in awe. "That is marvellous! Marvellous! How could you do it?"

And yet, for all the delight she expressed, Thyrsis was conscious of a chill of disappointment, of a doubt lurking in the background of his mind. It was inevitable, in the nature of things--how could the book mean to any human creature what it had meant to him? Seven long months he had toiled with it, he had been through the agonies of a child-birth for it. And another person would read it all in one day!--It was the old, old agony of the artist, who can communicate so small a part of what has been in his soul.

Section 2. He wanted to talk about his book, but Corydon wanted to talk about him. She had waited so long, and suffered so much--and now at last he was here! "Oh, Thyrsis!" she cried. "There's just no use in my trying--I can't do anything at all without you!"

"You won't have to do it any more," he said. "We shall not part again."

"And you are sure you want me? You have no more doubts?"

"How could I have any doubts--after that letter. Ah, that was a brave letter, Corydon! It made me think of you as some old Viking's daughter! That is the way to go at the task!"

"And then I may feel certain!" she said.

"You may stop thinking all about it," he replied. "We'll waste no more of our time--we'll put it aside and get to work."

They spent the day wandering about in the park and talking over their plans. "I suppose it'll be all right now that I'm with you," said Thyrsis. "I mean, there's no great hurry about getting married."

"Oh, no!" she answered. "We dare not think of that, until you have money."

"How I wish we didn't have to get married!" he exclaimed.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because-why should we have to get anybody else's permission to live our lives? I've thought about it a good deal, and it's a slave-custom, and it makes me ashamed of myself."

"But don't you believe in marriage, dear?"

"I do, and I don't. I believe that a man who exposes a woman to the possibility of having a child, ought to guarantee to support the woman for a time, and to support the child. That's obvious enough--no one but a scoundrel would want to avoid it. But marriage means so much more than that! You bind yourself to stay together, whether love continues or whether it stops; you can't part, except on some terms that other people set down. You have to make all sorts of promises you don't intend to keep, and to go through forms you don't believe in, and it seems to me a cowardly thing to do."

"But what else can one do?" asked Corydon.

"It's quite obvious what we could do. We don't intend to be husband and wife; and so we could simply go away and go on with our work."

"But think of our parents, Thyrsis!"

"Yes, I know--I've thought of them. But if every one thought of his parents, how would the world ever move?"

"But, dearest!" exclaimed Corydon, "if we didn't marry, they'd

simply go out of their senses!"

"I know. But then, they might threaten to go out of their senses if we did marry? And would that work also?"

"We must be sensible," said the girl. "It means so much to them, and so little to us."

"Yes, I suppose so," he answered. "But all the same, I hate it; when you once begin conforming, you never know where you'll stop."

"We shall know," declared the other. "Whatever we may have to do to get married, we shall both of us know that neither would ever dream of wishing to hold the other for a moment after love had ceased. And that is the essential thing, is it not?"

"Yes," assented Thyrsis. "I suppose so."

"Well, then, we'll make that bargain between us; that will be our marriage."

"That suits me better," he replied.

She thought for a moment, and then said, with a laugh, "Let us have a little ceremony of our own."

"Very well," said he.

"Are you ready for it now?" she inquired. "Your mind is quite made up?"

"Quite made up."

She looked about her, to make sure that no one was in sight; and then she put her hand in his. "I have been to weddings," she said. "And so I know how they do it.--I take thee, Thyrsis, to be the companion of my soul. I give myself to thee freely, for the sake of love, and I will stay so long as thy soul is better with me than without. But if ever this should cease to be, I will leave thee; for if my soul is weaker than thine, I have no right to be thy mate."

She paused. "Is that right?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, "that is right."

"Very well then," she said; "and now, you say it!"

And she made him repeat the words--"I take thee, Corydon, to be the companion of my soul. I give myself to thee freely, for the sake of love, and I will stay so long as thy soul is better with me than without. But if ever this should cease to be, I will leave thee; for if my soul is weaker than thine, I have no right to be thy mate."

"Now," she exclaimed, with an eager laugh--"now we're married!" And as he looked he caught the glint of a tear in her eyes.

Section 3. But the world would not be content to leave it on that basis. When they parted that afternoon, it was with a carefully-arranged program of work--they were to visit each other on alternate days and

go on with their German and music. But in less than a week they had run upon an obstruction; there was no quiet room for them at Corydon's save her bedroom, and one evening when Thyrsis came, she made the announcement that they could no longer study there.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Well," explained Corydon, "they say the maid might think it wasn't nice."

She had expected him to fly into a rage, but he only smiled grimly. "I had come to tell you the same sort of thing," he explained. "It seems you can't visit me so often, and you're never to stay after ten o'clock at night."

"Why is that?" she inquired.

"It's a question of what the hall-boy might think," said he.

They sat gazing at each other in silence. "You see," said Thyrsis, at last, "the thing is impossible--we've got to go and get married. The world will never give us any peace until we do."

"Nobody has any idea of what we mean!" exclaimed Corydon.

"No idea whatever," he said. "They've nothing in them in anyway to correspond with it. You talk to them about souls, and they haven't any. You talk to them about love, and they think you mean obscenity. Everybody is thinking obscenity about us!"

"Everybody but our parents," put in Corydon.

To which he answered, angrily, "They are thinking of what the others are thinking."

But everybody seemed to have to think something, and that was the aspect of the matter that puzzled them most. Why did everybody find it necessary to be thinking about it at all? Why did everybody consider it his business? As Thyrsis phrased it--"Why the hell can't they let us alone?"

"We've got to get married," said she. "That's the only way to get the best of them."

"But is that really getting the best of them?" he objected. "Isn't that their purpose--to make us get married?"

This was a pregnant question, but they did not follow it up just then. They went on to the practical problem of where and when and how to accomplish their purpose.

"We can go to a court," said he.

"Oh, no!" she exclaimed. "We'd have to meet a lot of men, and I couldn't stand it."

"But surely you don't want to go to a church!" he said.

"Couldn't we get some clergyman to marry us quietly?"

"But then, there's a lot of rigmarole!"

"But mightn't he leave it out?" she asked.

"I don't know," he said. "They generally believe in it, you see."

He decided to make an attempt, however.

"Let's go to-morrow morning," he said. "I'm going over to have the sound-post set in my violin, and that'll take an hour or so. Perhaps we can finish it up in the meantime."

"A good idea," said Corydon. "It'll give me to-night to tell mother and father."

Section 4. So behold them, the next morning, emerging from the little shop of the violin-dealer, and seeking for some one to fasten them in the holy bonds of matrimony! They were walking down a great avenue, and there were many churches--but they were all rich churches. "I never thought about it before," said Thyrsis. "But I wonder if there are any poor churches in the city!"

They stopped in front of one brown-stone structure that looked a trifle less elaborate. "It says Presbyterian," said Corydon, reading the sign. "I wonder how they do it."

"I don't know," said he. "But he'd want a lot of money, I'm sure."

"But mightn't he have a curate, or something?"

"Goose," laughed Thyrsis, "there are no Presbyterian curates!"

"Well, you know what I mean," she said--"an assistant, or an apprentice, or something."

"I don't know," said he. "Let's go and ask."

So, with much trepidation, they rang the bell of the parsonage on the side-street. But the white-capped maid who answered told them that the pastor was not in, and that there were no curates or apprentices about.

They went on.

"How much do you suppose they charge, anyway?" asked Thyrsis.

"I don't know--I think you give what you can spare. How much money have you?"

"I've got eight dollars to my name."

"Have you got it with you?"

"Yes--all of it."

"I get my twenty-five to-morrow," she added.

"Do you really get it?" he asked. "You can depend on it?"

"Oh yes--it comes the middle of each month."

"I've heard of people getting incomes from investments, and things like that, but it always seemed hard to believe. I never thought I'd meet with it in my own life."

"It's certainly very nice," said Corydon.

"Where does it come from?"

"There's a trustee of the estate who sends it. It's Mr. Hammond."

"That bald-headed man I met once?"

"Yes, he's the one. He's quite a well-known lawyer, and they say I'm fortunate to have him."

"I see," said Thyrsis. "I'll have to look into it some day. You know you have to endow me with all your worldly goods!"

They went on down the avenue, and came to a Jewish temple with a gilded dome. "I wonder how that would do," said Corydon.

"I don't think it would do at all," said Thyrsis. "We'd surely have to believe something there."

So they went on again. And on a corner, as they stopped to look about them, a strange mood came suddenly to Thyrsis. It was as if a veil was rent before him--as if a bolt of lightning had flashed. What was he going to do? He was going to bind himself in marriage! He was going to be trapped--he, the wild thing, the young stag of the forest!

"What is it?" asked Corydon, seeing him standing motionless.

"I--I was just thinking," he said.

"What?"

"I was afraid, Corydon, I wondered if we were sure--if we realized--"

"If we _realized!_" she cried.

"You know--it'll be forever--"

"Why, Thyrsis!" she exclaimed, in horror.

And so he started, and laughed uneasily. "It was just a queer fancy that came to me," he said.

"But how _could_ you!" she cried.

"Come, dearest," he said, hurriedly--"it's nothing. It seems so strange, that's all."

In the middle of the block they came to another church. "Unitarian!" he exclaimed. "Oh, maybe that's just the thing!"

And so they went in, and found a friendly clergyman, Dr. Hamilton by name, to whom they explained their plight. They answered his questions--yes, they were both of age, and they had told their parents. Also, with much stammering, Thyrsis explained that his worldly goods amounted to eight dollars.

"But--how are you going to live?" asked Dr. Hamilton.

Thyrsis was tempted to mention the masterpiece, but he decided not to. "I'm going to earn money," he said.

"Well," responded the other, "I suppose it's all right. I'll marry you."

And so the sexton was called in for a witness, and the clergyman stood before them and made a little speech, and said a prayer, and then joined their hands together and pronounced the spell. The two trembled just a little, but answered bravely, "I do," in the proper places, and then it was over. They shook hands with the doctor, and promised to come hear one of his sermons; and with much trepidation they paid him two dollars, which he in turn paid to the sexton. And then they went outside, and drew a great breath of relief. "It wasn't half as bad as I expected," the bridegroom confessed.

Section 5. Thyrsis invested in a newspaper, and as they went back to get the violin they read the advertisements of furnished rooms. In respectable neighborhoods which they tried they found that the prices were impossible for them; but at last, upon the edge of a tenement district, they found a corner flat-house, with a saloon underneath, where there were two tiny bedrooms for rent in an apartment. The woman, who was a seamstress, was away a good deal in the day, and Corydon learned with delight that she might use the piano in the parlor. The rooms were the smallest they had ever seen, but they were clean, and the price was only fifty cents a day--a dollar and a half a week for Thyrsis' and two dollars for Corydon's, because there was a steam-radiator in it.

There was a racket of school-children and of streetcars from the avenue below, but they judged they would get used to this; and having duly satisfied the landlady that they were married, and having ascertained that she had no objection to "light housekeeping," they engaged the rooms and paid a week's rent in advance.

"That leaves us two and a half to start life on!" said Thyrsis, when they were on the street again. "Our housekeeping will be light indeed!"

They walked on, and sat down in the park to talk it over.

"It's not nearly so reckless as it would seem," he argued. "For I have to earn money for myself any-how. And then there's the book."

"When will you hear about it?"

"I called the man up the day before yesterday. He said they were reading it."

"Have you said anything to him about money?"

"Not yet."

"Will they pay something in advance?"

"They will, I guess, if they like the story. I don't know very much about the business end of it."

"We mustn't let them take advantage of us!" exclaimed Corydon.

"No, of course not. But I hate to have to think about the money side of it. It's a cruel thing that I have to sell my inspiration."

"What else could you do?" she asked.

"It's something I've thought a great deal about," said he. **"It kept forcing itself upon me all the time I was writing. Here I am with my vision--working day and night to make something beautiful and sacred, something without taint of self. And I have to take it to business-men, who will go out into the market-place and sell it to make money! It will come into competition with thousands of other books--and the publishers shouting their virtues like so many barkers at a fair. I can hardly bear to think of it; I'd truly rather live in a garret all my days than see it happen. I don't want the treasures of my soul to be hawked on the streets."**

"But how else could people get them?" asked Corydon.

"I would like to have a publishing-house of my own, and to print my books with good paper and strong bindings that would last, and then sell them for just what they cost. So the whole thing would be consistent, and I could tell the exact truth about what I wrote. For I know the truth about my work; I've no vanities, I'd be as remorseless a critic of myself as Shelley was. I'd be willing to leave it to time for my real friends to find me out--I'd give up the department-store public to the authors who wanted it. And then, too, I could sell my books cheaply, so that the poor could get them. I always shudder to think that the people who most need what I write will have it kept away from them, because I am holding it back to make a profit!"

"We must do that some day!" declared Corydon.

"We must live very simply," he said, **"so we can begin it soon. Perhaps we can do it with the money we get from this first book. We could get everything we need for a thousand dollars a year, and save the balance."**

The other assented to this.

"I've got the prospectus of my publishing-house all written," Thyrsis went on. **"And I've several other plans worked out--people would laugh if they saw them, I guess. But before I get through, I'm going to have a reading-room where anyone can come and get my books. It'll be down where the poor people are; and I'm going to have travelling libraries, so as to reach people in the country. That is the one hope for better things, as I see it--we must get ideas to the people!"**

Thus discoursing, they strolled back to the home of Thyrsis' mother, and he went in to get his belongings together. Corydon went with him; and as they entered, the mother said, "There's an express package for you."

So Thyrsis went to his room, and saw a flat package lying on the bed. He stared at it, startled, and then picked it up and read the label upon it. "Why--why!--" he gasped; and then he seized a pair of scissors and cut the string and opened it. It was his manuscript!

With trembling fingers he turned it over. There was a letter with it, and he snatched it up. "We regret," it read, "that we cannot make you an offer for the publication of your book. Thanking you for the privilege of examining it, we are very truly yours." And that was all!

"They've rejected the book!" gasped Thyrsis; and the two stared at each other with consternation and horror in their eyes.

That was a possibility that had never occurred to Thyrsis in his wildest moment. That anyone in his senses could reject that book! That anyone could read a single chapter of it and not see what it was!

"They only had it five days!" he exclaimed; and instantly an explanation flashed across his mind. "I don't believe they read it!" he cried. "I don't believe they ever looked at it!"

But, read or unread, there was the manuscript--rejected. There was no appeal from the decision; there was no explanation, no apology--they had simply rejected it! It was like a blow in the face to Thyrsis; he felt like a woman whose love is spurned.

"Oh the fools! The miserable fools!" he cried.

But he could not bring much comfort to his soul by that method. The seriousness of it remained. The publishing-house was one of the largest and most prosperous in the country; and if they were fools, how many more fools might there not be among those who stood between him and the public? And if so, what would he do?

Section 6. So these two began their life under the shadow of a cloud. At the very first hour, when they should have been all rapture, there had come into the chamber of their hearts this grisly spectre--that was to haunt them for so many years!

But they clenched their hands grimly, and put the thought aside, and moved their worldly goods to the two tiny rooms. When they had got their trunks in, there was no place to sit save on the beds; and though Corydon had cast away all superfluities for this pilgrimage, still it was a puzzle to know where to put things.

But what of that--they were together at last! What an ecstasy it was to be actually unpacking, and to be mingling their effects! A kind of symbol it was of their spiritual union, so that the most commonplace things became touched with meaning. Thyrsis thrilled when the other brought in an armful of books to him--all this wealth was to be added to his store! He owned no books himself, save a few text-books, and some volumes of poetry that he knew by heart. Other

books he had borrowed all his life from libraries; and he often thought with wonder that there were people who would pay a dollar or two for a book which they did not mean to read but once!

Also there were a hundred trifles which came from Corydon's trunk, and which whispered of the intimacies of her life; the pictures she put upon her bureau, the sachet-bags that went into the drawer, the clothing she hung behind the door. It disturbed him strangely to realize how close she was to be to him from now on.

And then, the excursion to the corner-grocery, and the delight of the plunge into housekeeping! A pound of butter, and some salt and pepper, and a bunch of celery; a box of "chipped beef", and a dozen eggs, and a quart of potatoes; and then to the baker's, for rolls and sponge-cakes--did ever a grocer and a baker sell such ecstasies before? They carried it all home, and while Corydon scrubbed the celery in the bath-room, Thyrsis got out his chafing-dish and set the beef and eggs to sizzling, and they sat and sniffed the delicious odors, and meantime munched at rolls and butter, because they were so hungry they could not wait.

What an Elysian festivity they made of it! And then to think that they would have three such picnics every day! To be sure, the purchases had taken one half of Thyrsis' remaining capital; but then, was it not just that spice of danger that gave the keen edge to their delight? What was it that made the sense of snugness and intimacy in their little retreat, save the knowledge of a cold and hostile world outside?

The next morning Thyrsis took his manuscript to another publisher, and then they went at their work. Corydon laughed aloud with delight as they began the German--for what were all its terrors now, when she had Thyrsis for a dictionary! They fairly romped through the books. In the weeks that followed they read "Werther" and "Wilhelm Meister" and "Wahlverwandschaften"; they read "Undine" and "Peter Schlemil" and the "Leben eines Taugenichts"; they read Heine's poems, and Auerbach's and Freitag's novels, and Wieland's "Oberon"--is there anybody in Germany who still reads Wieland's "Oberon?" Surely there must somewhere be young couples who delight in "Der Trompeter von Sekkingen," and laugh with delight over "der Kater Hidigeigei!"

Also they went at music. Corydon had been taught to play as many "pieces" as the average American young lady; but Thyrsis had tried to persuade her to a new and desperate emprise--he insisted that there was nothing to music until one had learned to read it at sight. So now, every day when their landlady had gone out, he moved his music-stand into the little parlor, and they went at the task. Thyrsis proposed to achieve it by a *tour de force*--the way to read German was to read it, and the way to read music was to read music. He would set up a piece they had never seen before, and they would begin; and he would pound out the time with his foot, and make Corydon keep up with him--even though she was only able to get one or two notes in each bar, still she must keep up with him. At first this was agony to her--she wanted to linger and get some semblance of the music; but Thyrsis would scold and exhort and shout, and pound out the time.

And so, to Corydon's own amazement, it was not many weeks before she

found that she was actually reading music, that they were playing it together. In this way they learned Haydn's and Mozart's sonatas, they even adventured Beethoven's trios, with the second violin left out. Then Thyrsis subscribed to a music-library, and would come home twice a week with an armful of new stuff, good and bad. And whenever in all their struggles with it they were able to achieve anything that really moved them as music, what a rapture it brought them!

Section 7. This was indeed the nearest they could ever come to creative achievement together; this was the one field in which their abilities were equal. In all other things there were disharmonies--they came upon many reefs and shoals in these uncharted matrimonial seas.

Thyrsis was swift and impatient, and had flung away all care about external things; and here was Corydon, a woman, with all a woman's handicaps and disabilities. She was like a little field-mouse in her care of her person--she must needs scrub herself minutely every morning, and have hot water for her face every night; her hair had to be braided and her nails had to be cared for--and oh, the time it took her to get her clothes on, or even to get ready for the street! She would struggle like one possessed to accomplish it more quickly, while Thyrsis chafed and growled and agonized in the next room. There was nothing he could do meantime--for were they not going to do everything together?

Then there was another stumbling-block--the newspapers! Thyrsis had to know what was going on in the world. He had learned to read the papers and magazines like an exchange-editor; his eye would fly from column to column, and he would rip the insides out of one in two or three minutes. To Corydon it was agony to see him do this, for it took her half an hour to read a newspaper. She besought him to read it out loud--and was powerless to understand the distress that this caused him. He stood it as long as he could, and then he took to marking in the papers the things that she needed to know; and this he continued to do religiously, until he had come to realize that Corydon never remembered anything that she read in the papers.

This was something it took him years to comprehend; there were certain portions of the ordinary human brain which simply did not exist in his wife. She had lived eighteen years in the world, and it had never occurred to her to ask how steam made an engine go, or what was the use of the little glass knobs on the telegraph-poles. And it was the same with politics and business, and with the thousand and one personalities of the hour. When these things came up, Thyrsis would patiently explain to her what she needed to know; and he would take it for granted that she would pounce upon the information and stow it away in her mind--just as he would have done in a similar case. But then, two or three weeks later, the same topic would come up, and he would see a look of sudden terror come into Corydon's eyes--she had forgotten every word of it!

He came, after a long time, to honor this ignorance. People had to bring some real credentials with them to win a place in Corydon's thoughts; it was not enough that they were conspicuous in the papers. And it was the same with facts of all sorts; science existed for Corydon only as it pointed to beauty, and history existed only as it was inspiring. They read Green's "History of the English People" in the evenings; and every now and then Corydon would have to go and plunge her face into cold water to keep her eyes open, The

long parliamentary struggle was utter confusion to her--she had no joy to watch how "freedom slowly broadens down from precedent to precedent." But once in a while there would come some story, like that Of Joan of Arc--and there would be the girl, with her hands clenched, and hot tears in her eyes, and the fires of martyrdom blazing in her soul!

These were the hours which revealed to Thyrsis the treasure he had won--the creature of pure beauty whose heart was in his keeping. He was humbled and afraid before her; but the agony of it was that he could not dwell in those regions of joy with her--he had to know about stupid things and vulgar people, he had to go out among them to scramble for a living. So there had to be a side to his mind that Corydon could not share. And it did not suffice just to tolerate the existence of such things--he had to be actively interested in them, and to take their point of view. How else could he hold his place in the world, how could he win in the struggle for life?

This, he strove to persuade himself, was the one real difficulty between them, the one thing that marred the perfection of their bliss. But as time went on, he came to suspect that there was something else--something even more vital and important. It seemed to him that he had given up that which was the chief source of his power--his isolation. The center of his consciousness had been shifted outside of himself; and try as he would, he could never get it back. Where now were the hours and hours of silent brooding? Where were the long battles in his own soul? And what was to take the place of them--could conversation do it, conversation no matter how interesting and worth while? Thyrsis had often quoted a saying of Emerson's, that "people descend to meet." And when one was married did not one have to descend all the time?

He reasoned the matter out to himself. It was not Corydon's fault, he saw clearly; it would have been the same had he married one of the seraphim. He did not want to live the life of any seraph--he wanted to live his own life. And was it not obvious that the mere physical proximity of another person kept one's attention upon external things? Was not one inevitably kept aware of trivialities and accidents? Thyrsis had an ideal, that he should never permit an idle word to pass his lips; and now he saw how inevitably the common-place crept in upon them--how, for instance, their conversation had a way of turning to personality and jesting. Corydon was sensitive to external things, and she kept him aware of the fact that his trousers were frayed and his hair unkempt, and that other people were remarking these things.

Such was marriage; and it made all the more difference to an author, he reasoned, because an author was always at home. Thyrsis had been accustomed, when he opened his eyes in the morning, to lie still and let images and fancies come trooping through his mind; he would plan his whole day's work in that way, while his fancy was fresh and there was nothing to disturb him. But now he had to get up and dress, thus scattering these visions. In the same way, he had been wont to walk and meditate for hours; but now he never walked alone. That meant incidentally that he no longer got the exercise he needed--because Corydon could never walk at his pace. And if this was the case with such external things, how much more was it the case with the strange impulses of his inmost soul! Thyrsis was now like a hunter, who starts a deer, and instead of putting spurs to

his horse and following it, has to wait to summon a companion--and meanwhile, of course, the deer is gone!

From all this there was but one deliverance for them, and that was music. Music was their real interest, music was their religion; and if only they could go on and grow in it--if only they could acquire technique enough to live their lives in it! This would take years, of course; but they did not mind that, they were willing to work every day until they were exhausted--if only the world would give them a chance! But alas, the world did not seem to be minded that way.

Section 8. Thyrsis had waited a week, and then written the second publisher, and received a reply to the effect that at least two weeks were needed for the consideration of a manuscript. And meantime his last penny was gone, and he was living on Corydon's money. It was clear that he must earn something at once; and so he had to leave her to study and practice in her own room, while he cudgelled his brains and tormented his soul with hack-work.

He tried his verses again; but he found that the spring had dried up in him. Life was now too sombre a thing, the happy spontaneous jingles came no more. And what he did by main force of will sounded hollow and vapid to him--and must have sounded so to the editors, who sent them back.

Then he tried book-reviewing; but oh, the ghastly farce of book-reviewing! To read futile writing and sham writing of a hundred degrading varieties--and never dare to utter a truth about them! To labor instead to put one's self in the place of the school-girl reader and the tired shop-clerk reader and the sentimental married-woman reader, and imagine what they would think about the book, and what they would like to have said about it! To take these little pieces of dishonesty to an office, and sit by trembling while they were read, and receive two dollars apiece for them if they were published, and nothing at all if one had been so lacking in cunning as to let the editor think that the book was not worth the space!

However, Thyrsis had cunning enough to earn the cost of his room and his food for two weeks more. Then one day the postman brought him a letter, the inscription of which made his heart give a throb. He ripped the envelope open and read a communication from the second publisher:

"We have been interested in your manuscript, and while we do not feel that we can undertake its publication, we should like an opportunity to talk with you about it."

"What does that mean?" asked Corydon, trembling.

"God knows," he answered. "I'll go and see them this morning."

When he came back, it was to sink into a chair and stare in front of him with a savage frown. "Don't ask me!" he said, to Corydon. "Don't ask!"

"Please tell me!" cried the girl. "Did you see them?"

"Yes," said Thyrsis--"I saw a fat man!"

"A fat man!"

"Yes--a fat man. A fat body, and a fat mind, and a fat soul."

"Please tell me, Thyrsis!"

"He said my book wouldn't sell, because the public had got tired of that sort of thing."

"That sort of thing!"

"It seems that people used to buy 'historical romances', and now they've stopped. The man actually thought my book was one of that kind!"

"I see. But then--couldn't you tell him?"

"I told him. I said, 'Can't you see that this book is original--that it's come out of a man's heart?' 'Yes,' he said, 'perhaps. But you can't expect the public to see it.' And so there you are!"

Thyrsis sat with his nails dug into his palms. "It's just like the book-reviews!" he cried. "He knows better, but that doesn't count--he's thinking about the public! And he's got to the point where he doesn't really care--he's a fat man!"

"And so he'll not publish the book?"

"He'll not have anything more to do with me. He hates me."

"_Hates_ you?"

"Yes. Because I have faith, and he hasn't! Because I wouldn't stoop to the indignity he offered!"

"What did he offer?"

"He says that what the public's reading now is society novels--stories about up-to-date people who are handsome and successful and rich. They want automobiles and theatre-parties and country-clubs in their novels."

"But Thyrsis! You don't know anything about such things!"

"I know. But he said I could find out. And so I could. The point he made was that I've got passion and color--I could write a moving love-story! In other words, I could use my ecstasy to describe two society-people mating!"

There was a pause. "And what did you do with the manuscript?" asked Corydon, in a low voice.

"I took it to another publisher," he answered.

"And what are you going to do now?"

"I've been to see the editor of the 'Treasure Chest.'"

The "Treasure Chest" was a popular magazine of fiction, a copy of which Thyrsis had seen lying upon the table of their landlady. He had glanced through the first story, and had declared to Corydon that if he had a stenographer he could talk such a story at the rate of twenty thousand words a day.

"And did the editor see you?"

"Yes. He's a big husky 'advertising man'--he looks like a prize-fighter. He said if I could write, to go ahead and prove it. He pays a cent for five words--a hundred dollars for a complete serial. He pays on acceptance; and he said he'd read a scenario for me. So I'm going to try it."

"What's it to be about?" asked Corydon.

"I'm going to try what they call a 'Zenda' story," said Thyrsis. "The editor says the readers of the 'Treasure Chest' haven't got tired of 'Zenda' stories."

And so Thyrsis spent the afternoon and evening wandering about in the park; and sometime after midnight he wrote out his scenario. The advantage of a "Zenda" story was that, as the adventures happened in an imaginary kingdom, there would be no need to study up "local color". As for the conventional artificial dialect, he could get it from any of the "romances" in the nearby circulating library. He did not dare to take the scenario the next day, but waited a decent interval; and when he returned it was to report that the story was considered to be promising, and that he was to write twenty thousand words for a test.

Section 9. So Thyrsis shut himself up and went to work. Sometimes he wrote with rage seething in his heart, and sometimes with laughter on his lips. This latter was the case when he did the love-scenes--because of the "passion and color" he bestowed upon the fascinating countess and the clever young American engineer. He could have written the twenty thousand words in three days; but he waited ten days, so that the editor might not think that he was careless. And three days later he went back for the verdict.

The editor said it was good, and that if the rest was like it he would accept the story. So Thyrsis went to work again, and finished the manuscript, and put it away until time enough had elapsed. And meanwhile came a letter from the literary head of the third publishing-house, regretting that he could not accept the book.

It was such a friendly letter that Thyrsis went to call there, and met a pleasant and rather fine-souled gentleman, Mr. Ardsley by name, who told him a little about the problems he faced in life.

"You have a fine talent," he said--"you may even have genius. Your book is obviously sincere--it's *vecu*, as the French say. I suspect you must have been in love when you wrote it."

"In a way," said Thyrsis, flushing slightly. He had not intended that to show.

The other smiled. "It's overwrought in places," he went on, "and it tends to incoherency. But the main trouble is that it's entirely

over the heads of the public. They don't know anything about the kind of love you're interested in, and they'd laugh at it."

"But then, what am I to do?" cried Thyrsis.

"You'll simply have to keep on trying, till you happen to strike it."

"But--how am I to live?"

"Ah," said Mr. Ardsley, "that is the problem." He smiled, rather sadly, as he sat watching the lad. "You see how I've solved it," he went on. "I was young once myself, and I tried to write novels. And in those days I blamed the publishers--I thought they stood in my way. But now, I see how it is; a publisher is engaged in a highly competitive business, and he barely makes interest on his capital; he can't afford to publish books that won't pay their way. Here am I, for instance--it's my business to advise this house; and if I advise them wrongly, what becomes of me? If I take them your manuscript and say, 'It's a real piece of work,' they'll ask me, 'Will it pay its way?' And I have to answer them, 'I don't think it will.'"

"But such things as they publish!" exclaimed the boy, wildly.

And Mr. Ardsley smiled again. "Yes," he said. "But they pay their way. In fact, they save the business."

So Thyrsis went out. He saw quite clearly now the simple truth--it was not a matter of art at all, but a matter of business. It was a business-world, and not an art-world; and he--poor fool--was trying to be an artist!

For three days more he toiled at his pot-boiler; and then, late at night, he went out to get some fresh air, and to try to shake off the load of despair that was upon him. And so came the explosion.

Perhaps it was because the wind was blowing, and Thyrsis loved the wind; it was a mirror of his own soul to him, incessant and irresistible and mysterious. And so his demons awoke again. He had gone through all that labor, he had built up all that glory in his spirit--and it was all for naught! He had made himself a flame of desire--and now it was to be smothered and stifled!

He had written his book, and it was a great book, and they knew it. But all they told him was to go and write another book--and to do pot-boilers in the meantime! But that was impossible, he could not do it. He would win with the book he had written! He would make them hear him--he would make them read that book!

He began to compose a manifesto to the world; and towards morning he came home and shut himself in and wrote it. He called it "Business and Art;" and in it he told about his book, and how he had worked over it. He told, quite frankly, what the book was; and he asked if there was anywhere in the United States a publisher who published books because they were noble, and not because they sold; or if there was a critic, or booklover, or philanthropist, or a person of any sort, who would stand by a true artist. "This artist will work all day and nearly all night," he wrote, "and he wants less than the

wages of a day-laborer. All else that ever comes to him in his life he will give for a chance to follow his career!"

Then Corydon awoke, and he read it to her. She listened, thrilling with amazement.

"Oh, Thyrasis!" she cried. "What are you going to do with it?"

"I'm going to have it printed," he said, "and send it to all the publishers; and also to literary men and to magazines."

"And are you going to sign your name to it?" she cried.

"I've already signed my name to it," he answered.

"And when are you going to do it?"

"As soon as the book comes back from the next publisher."

Then he sat down to breakfast; and afterwards, without resting, he finished the pot-boiler, and took it to the editor. After a due interval he went again, trembling and faint with anxiety. He had sold only one book-review, and he was using Corydon's money again. People who hated him had predicted that he would do just that, and he had answered that he would die first!

He came home, radiant with delight. "He says he'll take it!" he proclaimed. "Only I've got to do a new ending for the fourth installment--he wants something more exciting. So I'm going to have the countess caught in a burning tower!"

And he wrote that, and went yet again, and came home with a hundred dollars buttoned tightly in his inside vest-pocket. He was like a man who has escaped from a dungeon. The field was clear before him at last! His manifesto was going out to the world!

BOOK V

THE BAIT IS SEIZED

They sat, gazing down the slope of the little vale. She was turning idly the pages of the book, and she read to him--

"Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night!--
Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power
Befalls me wandering through this upland dim.
Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour;
Now seldom come I, since I came with him."

"It was here we first read the poem," he said. "Every spot brings

back some line of it."

"Even the old oak-tree where we used to sit," she smiled--

"Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our tree is there!" _

Section 1. Thyrsis was half hoping that the next publisher would decline the manuscript; and he was only mildly stirred when he got a letter saying that although the publisher could not make an offer for the book, one of his readers was so much interested in it that he would like to have a talk with the author. Thyrsis replied that he was willing; and to his surprise he learned that the reader was none other than that Prof. Osborne, who in the university had impressed upon him his ignorance of the art of writing.

He paid a call at the professor's home, and they had a long talk. There was nothing said about their former interview. Evidently the other recognized that Thyrsis had succeeded in making good his claim to be allowed to hew his own way; and Thyrsis was content with that tacit surrender.

They talked about the book. The professor first assured him that it would not sell, and then went on to explain to him why; and so they came to a grapple.

"The thing is sincere, perhaps even exalted," said Prof. Osborne; "but it's overstrained and exaggerated."

"But isn't it alive?" asked Thyrsis.

The other pondered; he always spoke deliberately, choosing his words with precision. "Some people might think so," he said. "For myself, I have never known any such life."

"But what's that got to do with it?" cried Thyrsis.

"It has much to do with it--for me. One has to judge by what one knows--"

"But can't one be taught?"

The professor meditated again. "I have lived forty-five years," he said, "and you have lived less than half that. I imagine that I have read more, studied more, thought more than you. Yet you ask me to submit myself to your teaching!"

"No, no!" cried Thyrsis, eagerly. "It is not as if it were a matter of learning--of scholarship--of knowledge of the world. There is an intensity of experience that is not dependent upon time; in the things of the imagination--in matters of inspiration--surely one does not have to be old or learned."

"That might be true," admitted the other, hesitatingly.

"You read the poetry of Keats or Shelley, for instance. They were as young as I am when they wrote it, and yet you do not refuse to acknowledge its worth. Is it just because they are dead, and their poems are classics?"

So these two wrestled it out. Thyrsis could bring the other to the point of acknowledging that there might be genius in his work, but he could not bring him to the point of doing anything about it. The poet went away, seeing the situation quite clearly. Prof. Osborne was an instructor; it was his business to know; and if he should abdicate before one of his pupils, then what would become of authority? He had certain models, which he set before his class; these models constituted literature. If anyone might disregard them and proceed to create new models according to his own lawless impulse--then what anarchy would reign in a classroom! Under such circumstances, it was remarkable that the professor had even been willing to admit of doubts; as Thyrsis walked home he clenched his hands and whispered to himself, "I'll get that man some day!"

Section 2. The road now lay clear before Thyrsis, and accordingly he set grimly to work. He had his document printed upon a long slip of paper, and got several packages for Corydon to address. And one evening they took them out and dropped them into the mailbox. "And now we'll see!" he said.

They soon saw. When he came in for lunch the next day, Corydon came to the door, in great excitement. "S-sh!" she whispered. "There's a reporter here!"

"A reporter!" he echoed.

"Yes--a woman."

"What does she want?"

"She wants an interview about the book."

"Where is she from?"

"She's from the 'Morning Howl'. She's read the circular."

"But I never sent it there!"

"I know; but she says a friend gave it to her. She knows all about it."

So Thyrsis went in, like a lamb to the slaughter. He was new to interviews, and he yielded to the graces of the friendly and sympathetic lady. Yes, he would be glad to tell about his book; and about where and how he had written it, and all the hopes he had based upon it.

"And your wife tells me you've just been married!" said the lady, with a winning smile, and she proceeded to question him about this. They had become good friends by that time, and Thyrsis told her many things that he would not have told save to a charming lady. And then she asked for his picture, explaining that she could give so much more space to the "story" if she had one. And then she begged for a picture of Corydon, and was deeply hurt that she could not have it.

She prolonged the interview for an hour or so, and came back again and again in the effort to get this picture of Corydon. Finally she rose to go; but out in the hall, as she was bidding them good-bye, she suddenly exclaimed that she had left her gloves, and went back

and got them, and then hurried away. And it was not until an hour or two later that Thyrsis made the horrible discovery that the photograph of Corydon which had stood upon his bureau was standing upon his bureau no longer!

So next morning, there were their two photographs upon the second page of the 'Morning Howl', and a, two-column headline:

"YOUTHFUL GENIUS OFFERS HIMSELF FOR SALE!"

Thyrsis rushed through this article, writhing with horror and dismay. The woman had made him into what they called a "human interest" feature. There was very little about his book, but there was much about the picturesque circumstances under which he had written it. There was a description of their personal appearance--of Corydon's sweet face and soulful black eyes, and of his broad forehead and sensitive lips. There was also a complete description of their domestic menage, including the chafing-dish and the odor of lamb-chops. There was a highly diverting account of how they had "eloped" with only eight dollars in the world; together with all the agonies of their parents, as imagined by the sympathetic lady.

They had been butchered to make a holiday for the readers of a yellow journal! "This is a wonderfully interesting world," the paper seemed to say--"well worth the penny it costs to read about it! Here on the first page is Antonio Petronelli, who cut up his sweetheart with a butcher-knife, and packed her in a trunk. And here are seven people burned in a tenement-house; and an interview with Shrike, the plunger, who made three millions out of the wheat-corner. But most diverting of all are these two little cherubs who ran away and got married, and now want the world to support them while they write masterpieces of literature!"

And could not one see the great public devouring the tale--the Wall Street clerks in the cars, and the shop-girls over their sandwiches and coffee, and the loungers in the cafes of the Tenderloin! Could not one picture their smiles--not contemptuous, but genial, as of people who have learned that it is indeed an interesting world, and well worth the penny it costs to read about it!

Section 3. Corydon shed tears of rage over this humiliation, and she wrote a letter full of bitter scorn to the newspaper woman. In reply to it came a friendly note to the effect that she had done the best thing in the world for them--that when they knew more about life and the literary game, they would recognize this!

The tangible results of the adventure were three. First there came a letter, written on scented note-paper, from a lady who commended their noble ideals and wished them success--but who did not sign her name. Second, there came a visit from a brother poet--a man about forty years of age, shabby and pitiful, with watery, light blue eyes and a feeble straggly moustache, and a manner of agonized diffidence. He stood in the doorway and shifted from one foot to the other, and explained that he had read the article, and had come because he, too, was an unrecognized genius. He had written two volumes of poetry, which were the greatest poetry ever produced in English--Milton and Shakespeare would be forgotten when the world had read these volumes. For ten years he had been trying to find some publisher or literary man to recognize him; and perhaps Thyrsis

would be the man.

He came in and sat on the bed and unwrapped his two volumes--several hundred typewritten pages, elaborately bound up in covers of faded pink silk. And Thyrsis read one and Corydon the other, while the poet sat by and watched them and twisted his hands nervously. His poetry was all about stars and blue-bells and moonlight, about springtime and sighing lovers, about cold, rain-beaten graves and faded leaves of autumn--the subjects and the images which have been the stock in trade of minor poets for two thousand years and more. Thyrsis, as he read, could have marked fifty phrases which were feeble imitations of things in Tennyson and Longfellow and Keats; and he read for half an hour, in the vain hope of finding a single vigorous line.

This interview was a very painful one. He could not bear to hurt the poor creature's feelings, and he did not know how to get rid of him. The matter was made still more difficult by the presence of Corydon, who did not know the models, and therefore thought the poetry was good. She let the visitor go on to pour out his heart; until at last came a climax that Thyrsis had been expecting all along. The man explained that he was a bookkeeper, out of work, and with a wife and three children on the verge of starvation; and then he tried to borrow some money from them!

The third result was the important one. It was a letter from a publishing-house.

"We are on the lookout for vital and worth-while books," it read, "and we are not afraid to venture. We have been much interested in the account of your work, and we should be very glad if you would give us a chance to read it immediately."

Thyrsis had never heard of this publishing-house, but that did not chill his delight. He hurried downtown with the manuscript, and came back to report. The concern was lodged in two small rooms in an obscure office-building. The manager, a Mr. Taylor, was a man not particularly prepossessing in appearance, but he was a person of intelligence, and was evidently interested in the book. Moreover he had promised to read it at once.

And that same week came the reply--a reply which set the two almost beside themselves with happiness. "I have read your manuscript," wrote Mr. Taylor. "And I have no hesitation in pronouncing it a work of genius. In fact, I am not sure but what it is the greatest piece of literature it has ever been my fortune as a publisher to come upon. It is vital, and passionately sincere, and I will stake my reputation upon the prophecy that it will be an instantaneous success. I hope that we may become the publishers of it, and will be glad if you will come to see me at once and talk over terms."

Thyrsis read this aloud; and then he caught Corydon in his arms, and tears of joy and relief ran down her cheeks.

He went to see the publisher, and for ten or fifteen minutes he listened to such a panegyric upon his book as made his cheeks burn. Visions of freedom and triumph rose before him--he had come into his own at last. And then Mr. Taylor proceeded to outline his business proposition--and as Thyrsis realized the nature of it, it was as if

he had been suddenly plunged into an Arctic sea. The man wanted him to pay one-half the cost of the plates of his book, and in addition to guarantee to take one hundred copies at the wholesale price of ninety cents per copy!

"Is that--is that customary in publishing?" asked the other.

"Not always," Mr. Taylor replied; "but it is our custom. You see, we are an unusual sort of publishing-house. We do not run after the best-sellers and the trash--we publish real books, books with a mission and a message for the world. And we advertise them widely --we make the world heed them; and so we feel justified in asking the author to help us with a part of the expense. We pay ten per cent. royalty, of course, and in addition the author has the hundred copies of his book, which he can sell to friends and others if he wishes."

"What would it cost for my book?" Thyrsis asked.

And the man figured it up and told him it could be done for about two hundred and fifty dollars. "I'll make it two hundred and twenty-five to you," he said--"just because of my interest in your future."

But Thyrsis only shook his head sadly. "I wish I could do it," he said, "but I simply haven't the money--that's all."

And so he took his departure, and carried his manuscript to another publisher, and then went home, crushed and sick.

Section 4. But the more Thyrsis thought of this plan, the more it came to possess him. If he could only get that book printed, it could not fail to make its impression! He had thought many times in his desperation of trying to publish it himself; and if he did that, he would have to pay the cost of the plates, of the printing and everything; whereas by this method he could get it for much less, and would have a hundred copies which he could send to critics and men of letters, in order to make certain of the book's being read.

When the manuscript came back from the next publisher, with a formal note of rejection, Thyrsis made up his mind that he would concentrate his efforts upon this plan. So he got down to another pot-boiler.

An old sea-captain had told him a story of some American college boys who had stolen a sacred idol in China. Thyrsis saw a plot in that, and the editor of the "Treasure Chest" considered it a "bully" idea. So he toiled day and night for a couple more weeks, and earned another hundred dollars. And then he did something he had never done in his life before--he went to some relatives to beg. He pleaded how hard he had worked, and what a chance he had; he would pay back the money out of the first royalties from the book--which could not possibly fail to earn the hundred dollars he asked for.

Besides this, he had some money left from his first story; and so he went to Mr. Taylor, who was affable and enthusiastic as ever, and paid his money and signed the contracts. He was told that his book would be ready for the spring-trade; which meant that he would have

to possess his soul in patience for three months. Meantime he had forty dollars left--upon which he figured that he could have eight weeks of uninterrupted study.

But alas, for the best-laid plans of men! It was on a Tuesday morning that he paid out his precious two hundred and twenty-five dollars; and on the next Thursday morning, as he was glancing through the newspapers, he gave a cry of dismay.

"Corydon," he called. "What's the name of that lawyer, your trustee?"

"John C. Hammond," she replied.

"He shot himself in his office yesterday!" exclaimed Thyrsis; and he read her the account, which stated that Hammond had been speculating, and was believed to have lost heavily in the recent slump in cotton.

Corydon was staring at him with terror in her eyes. "What does it mean?" she cried.

"I don't know," said Thyrsis. "We'll have to inquire!"

They went out and telephoned to Corydon's father, and Thyrsis got hold of a college friend, a lawyer, and the four went to the office of the dead man. It was weeks before they became sure of the whole sickening truth, but they learned enough on that first day to make them fairly certain. John C. Hammond had got rid of everything--not only his own funds, but the funds belonging to the eight or ten heirs of the estate. The house in which he lived and everything in it was held in the name of his wife; and so there was not a penny to pay Corydon her four thousand dollars!

The girl was almost prostrated with misery; she vowed that she would go back to her parents, that she would go to work in an office. And poor Thyrsis could only hold her in his arms and whisper, "It doesn't matter, dear--it doesn't matter! The book will be out in the spring, and I can do pot-boilers for two!"

Section 5. But in the small hours of the night Thyrsis lay awake in his little room, and the soul within him was sick with horror. He was trapped--there was no use trying to dodge the fact, he was trapped! His powers were waning hour by hour, his vision was dying within him; every day he knew that he was weaker, that the grip of circumstance was tighter upon him. Ah, the hideous cruelty of the thing--it was like a murder in the night-time, like a torturing in some secret dungeon! He was burning up with his inward fires--there was a new book coming to ripeness within him, a book that would be greater even than his first one. And he could not write it, he could not even think about it! And there was the soul of Corydon calling to him, there were all the heights of music and poetry--and instead of climbing, he must torture his brain with hack-writing! He must go down to the editors, and fawn and cringe, and try to get books to review; he must study the imbecilities of the magazines and watch out for topics for articles; he must rack his brains for jokes and jingles--he, the master of life, the bearer of a new religion, the proud, high-soaring eagle, whose foot had never known a chain!

When such thoughts came to him, he would dig his nails into the palms of his hands, he would grit his teeth and curse the world. No, they should not conquer him! They should never bend him to their will! They might starve him, they might kill him--they might kill Corydon, also, but he would never give up! He would fight, and fight again, he would struggle to the last gasp--he would do his work, though all the powers of hell rose up to stop him!

One thing became clear to him that night, they could not afford two rooms. They must get along with one, and with the dollar and a half one at that. The steam-radiator had proved a farce, anyway--there was never any steam, and they had had to use gas-heaters. And now, what things Corydon could not get into his room, she would have to send back to her parents. The cost of the other room was the price of a book-review, and that sometimes meant a whole day of his precious time.

He talked it over with his wife, and she agreed with him. And so they underwent the humiliation of telling their landlady, and they obtained permission to keep Corydon's trunk in the hall, as there was no place for it in the tiny room. Such things as would not go upon the little dressing-stand, or hang behind the door, they put into boxes and shoved under the bed. And now, when midnight came, Thyrsis would go out for a walk while Corydon went to bed; and then he would come in and make his own bed upon the floor, with a quilt which the landlady had given them, and a pair of blankets they had borrowed from home, and his overcoat and some of Corydon's skirts when it was cold. Sometimes it would be very cold, and then he would have to sleep in his clothing; for there was no room save directly under the window, and they would not sleep with the window down. In the morning Corydon would turn her face to the wall while Thyrsis washed and dressed; and then he would go out and walk, while she took her turn.

And so he parted with the last shred of his isolation. He had to do all his work now with his wife in the room with him. And though she would sit as still as a mouse for hours, still he could not think as before; also, when she was worn out at night, he had to stop work and let her sleep. Under such circumstances it was small wonder that he was sometimes nervous and irritable; and, of course, there could be nothing hid between them, and when he was out of sorts, Corydon would be plunged into a bottomless pit of melancholy.

Then the strain and worry, and the night and day toil, began to have effects upon their health. Thyrsis had a strong constitution, but now he began to have headaches, and sometimes, if he worked on doggedly, they grew severe. He blamed this upon their heater; he knew little about hygiene, but he had studied physics, and he knew that a gas-heater devitalized the air. They had tried living in the room without heat, but in mid-winter they could not stand it. So on moderate days they would sit with the window up and their overcoats on; and when it was too cold for this, they would burn the heater for an hour or so, and when they began to feel the effects of the poisons, they would go out and walk for a while and let the room air.

But then again, Thyrsis wondered if the headaches might not be due to the food he was eating. They were anxious to economize on food; but they did not know just how to set about it. Thyrsis had read the

world's literature in English, French and German, in Italian, Latin and Greek; but in none of that reading had he found anything about the care of his own body. Such subjects had not been taught at school or college or university, and he knew of no books about them. Both he and Corydon had come from families which had the traditions of luxurious living, brought down from old days when there were plenty of negro servants, and when the ladies had been skilled in baking and preserving, and the men with chafing-dish and punch-bowl. At his grandfather's table Thyrsis had been wont to see a great platter of fried chicken at one end, and a roast beef at the other, and a cold ham on a side table; and he had hot bread three times a day, and cake and jam and ice-cream--and he had been taught to believe that such things were needed to keep up one's working-powers.

But now he had read how Thoreau had lived upon corn-meal mush; and he and Corydon resolved to patronize the less expensive foods. The price of meat and eggs and butter in the winter-time was in truth appalling; so they would buy potatoes and rice and corn-meal and prunes and turnips. They paid the landlady for the use of her gas-range, and would cook a sauce-pan full of some one of these things, and fill up with it three times a day. Then, at intervals, some one would invite them out to dinner; and because they were under-nourished they would gorge themselves--which was evidently not an ideal method of procedure. So in the end Thyrsis made up his mind to consult a physician about it; and this was a visit he never forgot--for it led directly to the most momentous events of his whole lifetime.

Section 6. The doctor announced that he had a little dyspepsia, and gave him a bottle full of a red liquid that would digest his food. Also he warned him to eat slowly, and to rest after meals. And Thyrsis, after thanking him, had started to go; when the doctor, who was an old friend of both families, asked the question, "How's Corydon?"

"She's pretty well," said Thyrsis.

"And are you expecting any children yet?" asked the other, with a smile.

Thyrsis started. "Heavens, no!" he said.

"Why not?" asked the doctor.

"We aren't going to have any."

"But why? Are you preventing it?"

Thyrsis hesitated a moment. "We're not living that way," he said.

The doctor stared at him. "Come here, boy," he said, "and sit down."

Thyrsis obeyed.

"Now tell me what you mean," said the other.

"I mean that we--we're just brother and sister," said Thyrsis.

"But--why did you get married?"

"We got married because we wanted to study."

"To study what?"

"Well, everything--music, principally."

"And how long do you expect to keep that up?"

"Oh, for a good many years--until we've accomplished something, and until we've got some money."

And the doctor sank back and drew his breath. "I don't wonder your stomach's out of order!" he said.

"What do you mean?" asked Thyrsis.

But the man did not answer that question. Instead he asked, "Don't you realize what you'll do to Corydon?"

"What?"

"You'll wreck her whole life--her health, to begin with."

"But how, doctor? She's perfectly happy. It's what we both want to do."

"But doesn't she love you?"

"Why, yes--but not that way."

The doctor smiled. "How do you know?" he asked.

"Because--she's told me so."

"And if it was otherwise--do you think she'd tell you that?"

"Why, of course she would."

"My boy," said the man, "she'd die first!"

Thyrsis was staring at him, amazed.

"Let me tell you a little about a good woman," said the other. "I've been married for thirty years--really married, I mean; we've got five children. And in all those thirty years my wife has never made an advance of that sort to me!"

After which the doctor went on to expound his philosophy of sex. "Love is just a little thing to you," he said; "you've got your books and your career. And you want it to be the same with Corydon--you've succeeded in persuading her that that's what she wants also. You're going to make her a copy of yourself! But you simply can't do it, boy--she's a woman. And a woman's one interest in the world is love--it's everything in life to her, the thing she's made for. And if you deprive her of love, whole love, I mean, you wreck her entirely. Just now is the time when she ought to be having her children, if she's ever to have any--and you're trying to satisfy her with music and philosophy!"

"But," cried Thyrsis, horrified, "I know she doesn't feel that way at all!"

"Maybe not," said the other. "Her eyes are not opened. It's your business to open them. What are you a man for?"

"But--she's all right as she is---"

"Isn't she nervous?"

"Why, yes--perhaps---"

"Isn't she sometimes melancholy? And doesn't she like you to kiss her? Doesn't she show she's happy when you hold her in your arms."

Thyrsis sat mute.

"You see!" said the other, laughing. "The girl is in love with you, and you haven't sense enough to know it."

Again Thyrsis could find no words. "But if we had a child it would ruin us!" he cried, wildly. "I've not a cent, and my whole career's at stake!"

"Well," said the other, "if it's as bad as that, don't have any children yet."

"But--but how can we?"

"Don't you know how to control it?"

Thyrsis was staring at him, open-eyed. "Why, no!" he said.

"Good lord!" laughed the other. "Where have you been keeping yourself?"

And then the doctor proceeded to explain to him the "artificial sterilization of marriage." No whisper of such a thing had ever come to the boy before, and he could hardly credit his ears. But the doctor spoke of it as a man of the world, to whom it was a matter of course; he went into detail as to the various methods that people used. And when finally Thyrsis rose to leave he patted him indulgently on the shoulder, and laughed, "Go home to your wife, my boy!"

Section 7. The effect of this conversation upon Thyrsis was alarming to him. At first he tried to put the thing aside, as being something utterly inconceivable between him and Corydon. But it would not be put aside.

The doctor had planted his seed with cunning. If he had told Thyrsis that he was doing harm to himself, Thyrsis would have said that it was not true, and stood by it; for he knew about himself. But the man had made his statements about Corydon--and how could he be sure about Corydon?

The crucial point was that it set him to thinking about her in this new way; a way which he had not dreamed of previously. And when once

he had begun to think about her so, he found he could not stop. For hitherto in his life, whenever he had thought of passion it had been as a temptation; he had known that it was wrong, and all that was best in him had risen up to oppose it. But now all that was changed--the image of Corydon the doctor had called up was one that broke down all resistance, and left him at the mercy of his impulses.

These impulses awoke--and with a suddenness and force that terrified him. He thought of her as his wife, and this thought was like a rush of flame upon him. His manhood leaped up, and cried aloud for its rights. He discovered, almost instantly, that he loved her thus, that he desired her completely. This was true now, and it had been true from the beginning; he had been a fool to try to persuade himself otherwise. What else had been the meaning of the passionate protests in his letters to her? Of the images he had used--of carrying her away in his arms, of breaking her to his will? And she loved him, too--she desired him completely! Why else had it been that those passages were precisely the ones that satisfied her? Why was it that she was always most filled with joy when he was aggressive and masterful?

Ah God, what an inhuman life it was they had been living all these months! In that inevitable proximity--shut up in a little room! And with the most intimate details of her life about him--with her kisses always upon his lips, her arms always about him, the subtle perfume of her presence always in his senses! Was it any wonder that they were nervous and restless--always sinking into tenderness, and exchanging endearments, and then starting up to scourge themselves?

He went home, and there was Corydon preparing supper. He went to her and caught her in his arms and kissed her. "I love you, sweetheart!" he whispered. And as she yielded to his embraces, he kissed her again and again, upon her lips and upon her cheeks and upon her neck. Ah, she loved him--else how could she let him kiss her like that!

But it was not so quickly that the inhibitions of a lifetime could be overcome. A sudden fear took hold of Thyrsis. What was he doing? No, she must have no idea of this--at least not until he had reasoned it out, until he had made up his mind that it was right.

So he drew back--and as he did so he noticed in her eyes a look of surprise. He did not often greet her in that way!

"I'm hungry as a bear," he said, to change the subject; and so they sat down to their supper.

Thyrsis had important writing to do that evening, and he tried his best, but he could not put his mind upon anything. He was all in a ferment. He pleaded that he had to think about his work, and went out for a long walk.

A storm was raging, and the icy gale beat upon him. It buffeted him, it flung him here and there; and he set himself to fight it, he drove his way through it, lusty and exultant. And music surged within him, lusty and exultant music. All the pent-up passion of his lifetime awoke in him, the blood ran hot in his veins; from some hidden portion of his being came wave after wave of emotion,

sweeping him away--and he spread his wings to it, he rose to the heights upon it, he laughed and sang aloud in the glory of it. He had known such hours in his own soul's life, but never anything like it with Corydon. He cried out, what a child he had been! He had taken her, he had sought to shape her to his will; and he had failed, she was not yet his--and all because he had left unused the one great power he had over her, the one great hold he had upon her. But now it would be changed--she should have him! And as he battled on with the elements there came to him Goethe's poem of passion:

"Dem Schnee, dem Regen,
Dem Wind entgegen!"

Section 8. So for hours he went. But when he had come home, and stood in the vestibule, stamping the snow from him, there came a reaction. It was Corydon he had been thinking of--Corydon, the gentle and innocent! How could he say such things to her? How could he hint of them? Why, he would fill her with terror! It was not to be thought of!

He went upstairs, and found that she was asleep. So he crept into his little bunk; but sleep would not come to him. The image of her haunted him. He listened to her breathing--he was as close to her as that, and still she was not his!

It was nearly day before he slept, and so he awoke tired and restless. And then came rage at himself--he went out and walked again, and stormed and scolded. He would not permit this, he had work to do. And he made up his mind that he would not allow himself to think about the matter for three days. By that time the truth would be clearer to him; and he meant to settle this question with his reason, and not with his blind desire.

He adhered to his resolution firmly. But when the three days were past, and he tried to think about it, it was only to be swept away in another storm of emotion. It seemed that the more tightly he pent this river up, the fiercer was its rush when finally it broke loose. For always his will was paralyzed by that suggestion that he might be doing harm to Corydon!

At last he made up his mind that he must speak to her; and one afternoon he came and knelt beside her and put his arms about her. "Sweetheart," he said, "I've something to ask you about."

Now to Corydon the mind of Thyrsis was like an open book. For days she had known that something was disturbing him. But also she had known that he was not ready to tell her. "What is it?" she asked.

"It's something very important," he said.

"Yes, dear."

"You know, I went to see the doctor the other day."

"Yes."

"And he told me--he thinks we are doing each other harm by the way we are living."

"What way, Thyrsis?"

"By not being really married. He says you are suffering because of it."

"But Thyrsis!" she cried, in astonishment. "I'm not!"

"He says you wouldn't know it, Corydon. It would keep you nervous and upset."

"But dear," she said, "I'm perfectly happy!"

"Are you sure of it?"

"Perfectly sure."

"And--and if it was ever otherwise--you would tell me?"

"Why, yes."

"And are you sure of _that_?"

She hesitated; and when she tried to answer, her voice was a whisper--"I think so, dear."

There was a pause. "Thyrsis," she exclaimed, suddenly, "I would have a child!"

"No, you needn't," he said; and he told her what the doctor had said.

It was quite as new to her as it had been to him, and even more startling. "I see," she said, in a low voice.

"Listen, Corydon," he whispered, "do you think you love me at all that way?"

"I don't know," she answered. "I never thought of such a thing."

"Do you think you could learn to love me so?"

"How can I tell, Thyrsis? It's so strange to me. It--it frightens me."

He looked up at her; and he saw that a flush was mottling her throat, and spreading over her cheeks. He saw the wild look in her eyes also; and he turned away.

"Very well, dearest," he said. "I don't want to disturb you."

So he tried to go back to his work. But he could not do his real work at all. He could practice the violin or read German with Corydon, but when he tried to plan his new book--that involved turning his thoughts loose to graze in a certain pasture, and they would not stay in that pasture, but jumped the fence and came back to her. And so he found himself taking more long journeys, in which he walked in the midst of the storm of his desire.

So, of course, all the former naturalness was gone between them. No

longer could they kiss and toy with one another as children in a fairy-world. They had suddenly become man and woman--fighting the age-long duel of sex. They would talk about the question; and the more they talked about it, the more it came to dominate the thoughts of both of them; and this broke down the barriers between them--Thyrsis became bolder, and more open in his speech. He lost his awe of her maidenhood and her innocence--he wooed her, he lured her on; he rejoiced in his power to agitate her, to startle her, to speak to her about secret things. He would clasp her in his arms and shower his kisses upon her; and she would yield to him, almost fainting with bliss--and then shrink from him in sudden alarm.

Then he would go out into the night and battle again with the wintry winds. That frightened shrinking of hers puzzled him. Everything was so strange to him; and how could he be sure what was right? He wanted to do what was right, with all his soul he wanted it; if he were to do wrong, or to make her think less of him, he could never forgive himself all his life. But then would come the wild surge of his longing, and his man's power would cry out within him. It was his business to overcome her shrinking, to compel her to yield. The question of the doctor rang in his ears as a taunt--"Why are you a man?" Why _was_ he a man?

Section 9. In the end these emotions reached a point where Thyrsis could no longer bear them. They were a torment to him, they deprived him of all rest and sleep. One afternoon he had held her a long time in his arms, and it hurt him; he turned away, and put his hands to his forehead. "Dearest," he cried, "I can't stand this any longer!"

"Why?" she asked. "What do you mean?"

"I mean it's just tearing me to pieces!"

She stared at him in fright. "Thyrsis!" she exclaimed. "You are unhappy!"

He sunk down upon the bed and hid his face in his arms. "Yes," he whispered, "I am unhappy!"

And so, all at once, he broke down her resistance. What had swayed him had been the thought of her suffering; and the thought of his suffering now conquered her.

Only she did not take days to debate it. She fled to him instantly, and wrapped her arms about him.

"Thyrsis," she whispered, "listen to me! I had no idea of that!"

"No, sweetheart," he said. "I'm sorry--I'm ashamed of myself--"

"No, no!" she cried, vehemently. "Don't say that! I love you, Thyrsis! I love you, heart and soul!"

He turned and gazed at her with his haggard eyes.

"I will do anything for you," she rushed on. "You shall have me! I will be your wife!"

Then, however, as he clasped her to him, there came once more the

shrinking. "Only give me a little time, dear," she whispered. "Let me get used to it. Let it come naturally."

But the only way he could have given her time would have been to go away. Here he was, in her room--with every reminder of her about him, with every incitement to his desire. And he had but two things to choose between--to go out and walk and think about her, or to come home and sit with her and talk about their love.

They had their supper, and then again she was in his arms. He told her about this trouble--he showed how the love of her was consuming him. Far into the night they sat talking, and he poured out his heart to her, he bore her with him to the mountain-tops of his desire. He took down a book of Spenser's, and read her the "Epithalamium"; he read her Shelley's "Epipsychidion," which they both loved. All the power of Thyrsis' genius was turned now to passion, and the hidden forces of him were revealed as never had they been revealed to her before. He became eloquent; he talked to her as he had lived with himself; he awed her and frightened her, as he had that evening upon the hill-top. Then at last, as the tide of his feeling swept him away again, he clasped her to him tightly, and hid his face in her neck. "I love you! Oh, I love you!" he cried.

She had sunk back and closed her eyes. "My Thyrsis!" she whispered.

"You love me?" he asked. "You are quite sure?"

"I am quite sure!" she said.

He kissed her; again and again he kissed her, until he had made sure of her desire. Then suddenly, he began with trembling fingers to unfasten the neck of her dress.

For a moment she did not comprehend what he meant. Then she gave a start. "Thyrsis!" she cried.

And she sprang up, staring at him with fright in her eyes.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Thyrsis!" she gasped. "What--what were you going to do?"

And at her question, shame swept over him. He was horrified at himself. How could he find words to tell her what he had been going to do?

He turned away with a moan, and put his hands over his face. "Oh God, I can't stand this!" he exclaimed.

Suddenly he went to his hat and coat. "I must go out!" he said.

"What do you mean?" cried Corydon.

"I mean I've got to go somewhere!" he replied. "I can't stand it--I can't stay here."

"Thyrsis!" she cried, wildly. And she sprang to him and flung her arms about him. "No, no!" she cried. "No!"

"But what am I to do?"

"Wait! Wait!"

And she pressed him tightly to her. "Thyrsis!" she whispered. "Can't you understand? Don't be so stupid, dear!"

"Stupid!"

"Yes, sweetheart--can't you see? I'm only a child! And it's so strange! It frightens me! Try to realize how I feel!"

"But what am I to do?"

"Do? Why you must make me, Thyrsis!" And as she said this she hid her face upon his shoulder and sobbed. "You are a man, Thyrsis, you are a man, and I am only a girl! Do what you want to! Don't pay any attention to me!"

And those words to Thyrsis were like the crashing of a peal of thunder. He clutched her to him, with a force that crushed her, that made her cry out. The soul of the cave-man awoke in him--he lifted his mate in his arms and bore her away to a secret place.

"Put down the light," she whispered, and he did this. And then again he began to unfasten her dress.

She submitted at first, she let him have his way. But later, when his hands touched the soft garment on her bosom, he felt a sharp tremor pass through her.

"Thyrsis!" she whispered.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Wait dear, wait!"

"Why wait?" he cried.

"Just a moment--please, dear!"

But he answered her--"No! Not a moment! No!"

She clung to him, trembling, pleading. "Please, dearest, please! I'm afraid, Thyrsis."

But nothing could stop him now. She was his--his to do what he pleased with! And he would bend her to his will! The voice of his manhood shouted aloud to him now, and it was like the clashing of wild cymbals in his soul.

He went on with what he was doing. She shrunk away from him, but he followed her, he held her fast.

Then she began to sob--"Oh Thyrsis, wait--spare me! I can't bear it! No, Thyrsis--no!"

But he answered her, "Be still! I love you! You are mine." And for every sob and every shudder and every moan of fear he had but one

response--"I love you! You are mine!"

He knew that he loved her now--and he knew what his love meant. Before this they had been strangers; but now he would penetrate to the secret places, to the holy of holies of her being.

Never in all his life had Thyrsis known woman. To him woman had been the supreme mystery of life, a creature of awe and sacredness--not to be handled, scarcely even to be thought about. Now the awful ban was lifted, the barriers were down; what had been hidden was revealed, what had been forbidden was permitted. So all the chained desire of a lifetime drove him on; it was almost more than he could bear. The touch of her warm breasts, the faint perfume of her clothing, the pressure of her soft, white limbs--these things set every nerve of him a-tremble, they turned a madness loose in him. A blinding whirl of emotion seized him, he was like a leaf swept away in a gale; his words came now in wild sobs, "I love you! I love you!"

So with quivering fingers he stripped her before him; and she crouched there, cowering and weeping. He took her in his arms; and that clasp there was no misunderstanding, for all the mastery of his will was in it. Nor did she try to resist him--she lay still, but shaking like a leaf, and choking with sobs. And so it was that he wreaked his will upon her.

Section 10. And then came the reaction--the most awful experience of his life. Thyrsis was sitting upon the bed, and staring in front of him, dazed. He was exhausted, faint, shuddering with horror. "Oh, my God, my God!" he whispered.

What had he done? Corydon, the gentle and pure--she had trusted herself to him, and how had he treated her? He had tortured her, he had defiled her! Oh, it was sickening; brutal, like a butchery! He sunk down in a heap, moaning, "My God! I can't bear it! I can't bear it!"

And then a strange thing happened--the strangest of all strange things! An unforeseeable, an unimaginable thing!

Corydon had started up, and was listening; and now suddenly he felt her arms stealing about him. "Thyrsis!" she whispered. "Thyrsis!"

"Oh, what shall I do?" he sobbed.

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, it was so horrible! horrible!"

"Thyrsis!" she panted, swiftly. "Don't say that!"

"How could I have done it?" he rushed on. "What a monster I am!"

"No! no!" she cried. "You don't understand, I love you! Don't you know that I love you?"

And she tightened her clasp about him, she stole into his arms again. "Forgive me!" she whispered. "Please, please--forgive me, Thyrsis!"

He stared at her, dazed. "Forgive _you_?"

"I had no right to behave like that!" she cried. "I was afraid--I couldn't control myself. But oh, Thyrsis, I love you!"

And she pressed herself upon him convulsively; she was troubled no longer. "Yes!" she panted. "Yes! I don't mind it any more! I am yours! I am yours! You may do whatever you please to me, Thyrsis--I love you!"

She covered him with kisses--his face, his neck, his body. She drew him down to her again, whispering in ecstasy, "_My husband!_"

He was lost in amazement. Could this be Corydon, the gentle and shrinking? No, she was gone; and in her stead this creature of desire--tumultuous and abandoned! She was like some passion-goddess out of the East, shameless and terrible and destroying! She was like a tigress of the jungle, calling in the night for its mate. She locked him fast in her arms--she was swept away in a whirlwind of emotion, as he had been swept before. And all her being rose up in one song of exultation--"Mine! Mine! Mine! Mine!"

"Ah, Thyrsis!" she cried. "My Thyrsis! I belong to you now! You can never escape me now! You can never leave me--my love, my love!"

And as Thyrsis listened to this song, his passion died. Reason awoke again, and a cold fear struck into his heart! What was the meaning of _this?_

Long hours afterward, as she lay, half-asleep, in his arms, she felt him give a sudden start and shudder.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Nothing," he said--"I just happened to think of something. Something that frightened me."

"What was it?"

"I was thinking, dear--_suppose I should become domestic!_"

BOOK VI

THE CORDS ARE TIGHTENED

_She had been reading in the little cabin, and a hush had fallen upon them.

"Yes, thou art gone! And round me too the night In ever-nearing

circle weaves her shade."

"Gone!" she said, and smiled sadly. "Where is he gone?"

And she turned the page and read again--

"But Thyrsis nevermore we swains shall see;
See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,
And blow a strain the world at last shall heed--
For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee!"

Then, after a pause, she added, "How often I have remembered those words! And how pitiful they are, when I remember them!"_

Section 1. It was a tiny cupboard of a room in a tenement. They sat upon their bed to eat, and they hid their soiled dishes beneath it. Dirty children screamed upon the avenue in front, and frowsy-headed women and wolfish men caroused in the saloon below. Yet here there came to them the angel with the flame-tipped wings, and here they dreamed their dream of wonder.

In the glory of their new-found passion all life became transfigured to them; they discovered new meaning in the most trivial actions. There was no corner so obscure that they might not come upon the young god hidden; they might touch his warm, tender flesh, and hear his silvery laughter, and thrill with the wonder of his presence. They spoke a new language, full of fire and color; they read new meanings in each other's eyes. The slightest touch of hand upon hand, or of lips to lips, was enough to dissolve them in tenderness and delight.

They rejoiced in the marvel of each other's being--in the glory of their bodies, newly revealed. To Thyrsis especially this was life's last miracle, a discovery so fraught with bliss as to be a continual torment. The incitements that were hidden in the softness and the odor of unbound and tumbled hair; the exquisiteness of maiden breasts, moulded of marble, rosy-tipped; the soft contour of snowy limbs, the rhythmic play of moving muscles--to dwell amid these things, to possess them, was suddenly to discover in reality what before had only existed in the realm of painting and sculpture.

Corydon also, in the glow of his delight, of his rapture and his ravening desire, discovered anew the wonder of herself, and came to a new consciousness of her beauty. She would stand and gaze before her, with her hands upon her breasts, and her head flung back and her eyes closed in ecstasy, so that he might come to her and kiss her--might kiss her again and again, might touch her with his lover's hands and clasp her with his lover's arms.

In most of these things she was his teacher. For Corydon was one person, in body, mind and soul; in her there were no disharmonies, no warring elements. His friend the doctor had set forth his idea of "a good woman"; but Corydon's goodness proved to be after no such pattern. Now that she was his, she was his; she belonged to him, she was a part of him, and there could be no thought of a secret shame, of any reserves or hesitations. Her body was herself, and it was joy to her; it was joy the more, because she could give it for love; and she sought for new ways to utter the completeness of her giving.

She was like a little child about it--so free, so spontaneous, so genuine; Thyrsis marvelled at her utter naturalness. For himself, in the midst of these things, there was always a sense of the strange and the terrible, a sense of penetrating to forbidden mysteries; but Corydon laughed in the sunlight of utter bliss--and she laughed most at him, when she found that her simple language had startled him.

For the maiden out of ancient Greece was now become a lover! And so she was revealed to Thyrsis--she who might have marched in the Panathenaic processions, with one of the sacred vessels in her hands, or run in the Attic games, bare-limbed and fearless. So he learned to think of her, singing in the myrtle groves Of Mount Hymettus, or walking naked in the moonlight in Arcadian meadows.

So he thought of her all through her life, whenever a moment of joy came to her--whenever, for instance, she found her way to the water. They had dressed her in long skirts and put her in a drawing-room--but Corydon had got to the water in spite of them; and all that any Nereid had ever known, that she had known from the time the waves first kissed her feet.

And so it was also with love; she was born to be a priestess of love's religion. She had waited for this hour--that she might take his hand, and lead him into the temple, and teach him the ritual. It was a ministry that she entered upon with the joy of all her being. "Ah, let me teach you how to love!" she would cry. "Ah, let me teach you how to love!"

Love was to her an utter blending of two selves, the losing of one's personality in another's; it meant the forgetting of one's self, and all the ends of self. And Thyrsis marvelled at the glory that came upon her, at each new rapture she discovered. All the language of lovers was known to her, all the songs of lovers were upon her lips:

"Du bist mir ewig,
Bist mir immer--
Erb und Eigen
Ein und All!"

Such was her woman's gift: precious beyond all treasures of earth, and given without price or question. And Thyrsis trembled as he realized it; he lived upon his knees before her, and floods of tenderness welled up in his heart. How utterly she trusted him, how completely she belonged to him! And what could he do to show himself worthy of it--this most wonderful dream of his life come true--

"If someone should give me a heart to keep,
With love for the golden key!"

Yet, amid all these raptures, Thyrsis was haunted by ghosts of doubt. Would he be able to do what his heart yearned to do? Love meant so much to her--and could it mean that much to him? Why could it not be to him the complete thing it was to her--why must he argue and wonder and fear?

For Thyrsis' ancestors had not dallied in Arcadian meadows. They had come from the wilds of Palestine and the deserts of Northern Africa; they had argued and wondered and feared in Gothic cloisters, in New England meeting-houses; and the shadow of their souls hung over him still. He could not love love as Corydon loved it, he could not

trust it as she trusted it. It could never seem to him the utterly natural thing--there was always a fear of pollution, a hint of satiety, a thrill of shame. Directly the first fires of passion had spent themselves, these anxieties came to him; he remembered how in his virgin youth he had thought of passion--as of something strange and uncomfortable, even grotesque, suggesting too closely a kinship with the animals. So he noticed that his feelings always waned before Corydon's. She wished him to linger--love meant so much to her!

Then too, the code of passion was all unknown to him. What was right and what was wrong? When should one yield to desire, and when should one restrain it? To Corydon such questions never came--to her there was no such possibility as excess; she was complete and perfect, and nature told her. If there were temptations and restraints and regrets, they were for Thyrsis; and he had to keep them for his own secret, he could ask no help from her. For he discovered immediately that with his proud imperiousness, he could not endure to have Corydon refuse herself to him. So this laid a new burden upon him, an appalling one. For were they not always together--her lips always calling him, the impulse towards her always with him?

There was another circumstance--the means they had to take to prevent the consequences of their love. From the very first, Thyrsis had shrunk from the thought of this; but it was only later that he realized how much it repelled him. It offended all his sense of economy and purpose; it was something done, and at the same time undone--and so it had in it the essence of all futility and wrongness. It took from passion its meaning and its excuse; and yet he could not say this to Corydon; and he knew also that he could no longer do without her. He was bound--bound fast! And every hour his chains would become tighter; what was now spontaneous joy would become a habit--a thing like eating and sleeping, a new and humiliating necessity of the flesh!

Section 2. Such were their problems. They might have solved them all, perhaps--had they only had time. But others came crowding upon them, others still more insistent and perplexing. The world was pressing them, jealous of their dream of delight.

Their little fund of money was gone, and so Thyrsis went back to his hack-work. All day he sat by the window and slaved at it, while Corydon lay upon the bed and read, or wandered about the park by herself. Thyrsis' burden was twice as heavy now, for he had to earn for two; and when in the ecstasies of love she cried out to him that she was his forever, the cruel mockery of circumstance translated this to mean that he would forever have to earn for two!

He wrote more book-reviews, and peddled them about; sometimes he was forced to exchange them for books he reviewed, and then to sell the books for twenty or thirty cents apiece. He wrote up some ideas for political cartoons, and got three dollars for one of them. He wrote a parody upon a popular poem, and got six dollars for that. He met a college friend, just returned from a trip in the Andes, and he patiently collected the material for a narrative, and sold it to a minor magazine for fifteen dollars.

And meanwhile he toiled furiously at another pot-boiler, a tale of

Hessians and Tories and a red-cheeked and irresistible revolutionary heroine, to fill the insatiable maw of the readers of the "Treasure Chest." On one occasion, when everything went wrong, Corydon took the half-dozen solid silver coffee-spoons and the heavy gold-plated berry-spoon which had constituted her outfit of wedding-presents, and sold them to a nearby jeweler for two dollars and a quarter.

But through all this bitter struggle they looked forward to a glorious ending. In April the book would be out--and then they would be free! They would go away to the country--perhaps to the little cabin of last summer! Ah, how they dreamed of that cabin, how they hungered for it! They pictured it, covered in snow, with the ice-bound brook in front of it--both the cabin and the brook asleep, and dreaming of the spring-time.

Thyrsis was dreaming of it also, with tears in his eyes and a mighty passion in his heart; for his new book was calling to him--he had to fight hard to keep it from taking possession of his thoughts and driving the pot-boilers out of the temple.

There came the joyful excitement of reading the proofs of his book; also of inspecting the cover-design, and the sample of the paper, and the "dummy". And then--it was two weeks from now! Then it was only ten days--then only one week. And finally the raptures of the first sample copy!

It was time the publishers had begun to advertise it, and Thyrsis went to see Mr. Taylor about the matter. Mr. Taylor was vague in his replies. Then came publication-day, and still no advertisements; and Thyrsis called again, and insisted and expostulated, and learned to his consternation that they were not going to advertise it; the season was a bad one, the firm had met with unexpected expenses, and so on. When Thyrsis reminded them of their promises, and threatened and stormed, Mr. Taylor informed him quietly that there was nothing in the contract about advertising.

So Thyrsis went home, and tried to forget his rage in the work of disposing of his hundred copies. He had prepared himself for the possibility of everything else failing, but here he had a plan whereby he felt that his deliverance was assured. He had made up a list of a hundred of the best-known men of letters in the country--college presidents and professors, editors and clergymen, novelists and poets and critics; and he had done more hack-work, and earned the twenty dollars it would take to send to each of them a copy of the book, together with his manifesto, and a little type-written note. This, he felt, would make certain of the book's being read; and once let the book be read by the real leaders of the country's thought, and his siege would be at an end!

So the packages went to the post-office, freighted with the burden of his hopes and longings. And two or three times a week Thyrsis went to see his publishers, and find out how the book was going. He was never able to ascertain just what they were doing with it, or how they expected to sell it; Mr. Taylor would tell him vaguely that it was doing fairly well--the season was "slow", and he must give the book time to "catch on".

And then came the reviews. A clipping-bureau had written, offering to furnish them at five cents apiece; and this was moderate,

considering that there were only a dozen altogether. Most of these were from unimportant out-of-town papers, whose book-reviews are written by the high-school nieces and the elderly maiden-aunts of the publishers. Of the metropolitan newspapers and literary organs, only three noticed the book at all; and two of these gave perfunctory mention, evidently made up from the publisher's statement on the cover.

The third writer had connected the book with the interview in the "Morning Howl", and he wrote a burlesque review of it, in which he hailed it as the "Great American Novel". His method was to retell the story, quoting the most highly-wrought passages, with just enough comment to keep it in the vein of farce. To Thyrsis this mockery came like a blast of fire in the face; he did not know that it was the regular method of the newspaper--a method by means of which it had made itself known as the cleverest and most readable paper in the country.

Section 3. All this was the harder for him, because it came at a black and spectral hour of his life. It was not enough that the book was falling flat, and that all their hopes were collapsing; a new and most terrible calamity befell them. For three months now they had been dissolved in the bliss of their young dream of love; and now suddenly had come a thunderbolt, splitting the darkness about them, and revealing the grim hand of Fate closing down!

For several years of her life Corydon had carried a trying burden--once each month she would have to lie down for three or four days and be a semi-invalid. And last month this had not happened; the time had come and gone, and she was as well as ever. She had told Thyrsis about it, and how it disturbed her; it might mean nothing, it had happened several times before to her; but then again--it might mean that she had conceived.

The idea had been too frightful to contemplate, however, and they had put it aside. It was not possible--the doctor had told them how to prevent it; he had told them that "everybody" did it, and that they could feel safe.

But now came the second month; and Corydon, filled with a vague terror, waited for the day. And horrible beyond all telling--the day came and went once more! And two days came--three days! And so finally Corydon went to see the doctor.

When she came home again, and entered the room, Thyrsis saw it all in her face, without her uttering a word. He went sick, all at once; and Corydon sank down upon the bed.

"Well?" he asked, in a hoarse voice.

"It's true," she said.

"And what did he say?"

"He said--he said I was in splendid shape, and that I would have a fine baby!"

And Thyrsis stared at her, and then suddenly burst into wild laughter, and hid his head in his arms. Such was their mood that she

could not feel sure whether he was laughing or crying.

Now, indeed, they were facing the reality of life. All the problems with which they had ever wrestled were as child's play to this problem; they could sit and read the deadly terror in each other's eyes. Corydon's lip was trembling, and her face was white and drawn and old. So swiftly had fled her young dream of joy!

"Thyrsis," she said, in a low voice, "it means ruin!"

"Yes," he answered.

And she clenched her hands tightly. "I will kill myself first!" she whispered. "I will not drag you down!"

He made no reply.

"Listen, Thyrsis," she went on. "There is only one thing to be thought of. I must get rid of it."

"Get rid of it?" he echoed. "How?"

"I don't know," she said. "But women often do it."

"I've heard of it," he replied. "But isn't it dangerous?"

"I don't know," she said, "and I don't care."

There was a pause.

"Why don't you ask the doctor?" he inquired.

"The doctor? There was no use us asking him, Thyrsis."

"Why not?"

"Because--he doesn't understand. He likes babies. That's his business."

They argued this. But in the end Thyrsis resolved that he must see the doctor himself. He must see him if it was only to pour out his anguish. It was the doctor's fault that this fearful accident had befallen them!

But the boy soon saw that it was as Corydon had said, there was nothing to be gained in that quarter. Babies were indeed the doctor's business; they were the business of the whole world, from his point of view. People got married to have babies; they were in the world to have babies, and anything else was just nonsense. Nowadays babies were the only excuse that people had for living--their morality began and ended with them. Moreover, babies were fine in themselves; they were beautiful and fat and jolly. The pagan old gentleman sang a very paeon in praise of babies--the more of them there were, the more laughter upon earth.

Also, having them was the business of women--that, and not reading German poetry and playing the piano. They all made a little fuss at the outset, but then they submitted, and they soon found that Nature knew more than they. Babies completed women's lives, they settled

their nerves; they gave them something to think about, and saved them from hysteria and extravagance and sentimentalism, and all the rest of the ills of the hour.

Then the doctor fixed his keen eyes upon him. "Are you and Corydon thinking about an abortion?" he demanded.

"I--I don't know," stammered Thyrsis. The word sounded ugly.

"I got that impression from her," said the other. "And now let me tell you--if you do that, it'll be something you'll never forgive yourself for as long as you live. In the first place, you may lose your wife. It's a very dangerous thing, and a woman is seldom the same after it. You might make it impossible for her ever to have a child again, and so blast her whole life. You'll have to trust her in the hands of some vile scoundrel--you understand, of course, that it's a crime?"

"I suppose so," said Thyrsis.

"It's a crime not only against the law--it's a crime against God. And it's the curse of our age!"

There was a pause.

"What's the matter with Corydon, anyway?" demanded the doctor.

"She's so young!" cried Thyrsis.

"Nonsense! She's nineteen now, isn't she? And she couldn't be in better condition."

"But she's so undeveloped--mentally, I mean."

"There's nothing in the world will develop her like maternity. And can't you see that she wants the baby?"

"Wants it!" shouted Thyrsis.

"Why, of course! She's dead in love with you, boy. And she wants the baby! Why shouldn't she have it?"

"If I could only make you understand--" protested Thyrsis, feebly.

"Yes!" exclaimed the doctor. "That's what they all say! Not a day passes that some woman doesn't sit in this office and say it! Each case is different from any other case that ever was or could be. They tell me how much they suffer, and what a state their nerves are in, and how busy they are, and how poor they are--their social duties, and their artistic duties, and their religious duties, and their philanthropic duties! And they weep and wring their hands, and tell me agonizing stories, and they offer me any sum I could ask--many a time I might earn a thousand dollars by something that wouldn't take me ten minutes, if only I didn't have a conscience!--Go away, boy, and get those ideas out of your head!"

Section 4. So Thyrsis went away, with a new realization of the seriousness of his position, with a new sense of the grip in which he was fast. It was a conspiracy of Nature, a conspiracy of all the

world! It was a Snare!

All through this love-adventure, even when most under the sway of his emotions, Thyrsis' busy mind had been groping and reaching for an understanding of it. Little by little this had come to him--and now the picture was complete. He had beheld the last scene of the panorama; he had got to the moral of the tale!

He had been the sport of cosmic forces, of the blind and irresistible reproductive impulse of Nature. Step by step he had been driven, he had played his part according to the plan. He had hesitated and debated and resolved and decided--thinking that he had something to do with it all! But now he looked back, and saw himself as a leaf swept along by a torrent. And all the while the torrent had known its destination! He had had many plans and many purposes, but always Nature had had but one plan and one purpose--which was the Child!

Twelve months ago Thyrsis had been a boy, carefree and happy, rapt in his dream of art; and now here he was, a married man, with the cares of parenthood on his shoulders! If anyone had told him that a trick could be played upon him, he would have laughed at them. How confident he had been--how certain of his mastery of life! And now he was in the Snare!

Dismayed as he was, Thyrsis could not but smile as he realized it. The artist in him appreciated the technique of the performance. How cunningly it had all been managed--how cleverly the device had been hidden how shrewdly the bait had been selected!

He went back over the adventure. What a fuss he and Corydon had made about it! What a vast amount of posturing and prelude, of backing and filling! And how solemnly they had taken it--how earnestly they had believed in the game! What convictions had weighed upon them, what exaltations had thrilled them--two pitiful little puppets, set here and there by unseen hands! Rehearsing from prologue to curtain the age-long drama, the drama of Sex that had been played from the beginning of the world!

He marvelled at the prodigality that Nature had displayed--at the treasures she had squandered to accomplish her purpose! She would create a million eggs to make one salmon; and she had created a million emotions to make one baby! What poems she had written for them--what songs she had composed for them! She had emptied the cornucopias of her gifts into their lap! She had strewn the pathway with roses before them, she had filled their mouths with honey, and their ears with the sound of sweet music; she had blinded them, she had stunned them, she had sent them drunken and reeling to their fate!

And the elaborate set of pretenses and illusions that she had invented for them! The devices to lull their suspicions--the virtues and renunciations, the humilities and the consecrations! Corydon had been frightened and evasive; Nature had made him suffer, so as to break her down! And he had been proud and defiant; and so Corydon, the meek and gentle, had been turned into a heroine of revolt! Nay, worse than that; those very powers and supremacies that he had thought were his protection--were they not, also, a part of the Snare? His culture and his artistry, his visions and his

exaltations--what had they been but a lure for the female? The iris of the burnished dove, the ruff about the grouse's neck, the gold and purple of the butterfly's wing! Even his genius, his miraculous, ineffable genius--that had been the plume of the partridge, the crowning glory before which his mate had capitulated!

These images came to Thyrsis, until he burst into wild, sardonic laughter. He saw himself in new and grotesque lights; he was the peacock, spreading his gorgeousness before a dazzled and wondering world; he was the young rooster, strutting before his mate, and thrilling with the knowledge of his own importance! He was each of the barnyard creatures by turn, and Corydon was each of the fascinated females. And somewhere, perhaps, stood the farmer, smiling complacently--for should there not be somewhere a farmer in this universal barnyard?

But then, the laughter died; for he thought of Maeterlinck's "Life of the Bee", and shuddered at the fate of the male-creature. He was a mere accident in the scheme of Nature--she wasted all his splendors to accomplish the purpose of an hour. And now it had been accomplished. He had had his moment of ecstasy, his dizzy flight into the empyrean; and now behold him falling, disembowelled and torn, an empty shell!

But no--it was not quite that way, Thyrsis told himself, after further reflection. In the human hive the male creature was not only the bearer of the seed he was also the worker. And so there was one more function he had to perform. All those fine frenzies of his, his ideals and his enthusiasms--they had served their purpose, and would fade; but before him there was still a future--a drab and dreary future of perpetual pot-boiling!

He recalled their bridal-night. All that had puzzled him in it and startled him--how clear it was now! Corydon had shrunk from him, just enough to lure him; and then, suddenly, her whole being had seemed to change--she had caught him, and held him fast. For he had accomplished her purpose; he had gotten her with child! And so he must stand by her--he must bring her food, that she might give the child life! And for that purpose she would hold him; for that she would use every art of which she was mistress--the whole force of her being would go into it!

She would not know this, of course; she would do it blindly and instinctively, as she had done everything so far. She would do it by those same generous and beautiful qualities that had made him hers! Therein lay the humor of his whole adventure--there lay the deadly nature of this Snare. The cords of it were woven out of love and tenderness, out of ecstasy and aspiration; and they were wound about his very heart-strings, so that it would kill him to pull them loose. And he would never pull them loose--he saw that in a sudden vision of ruin! She would be noble to the uttermost limit of nobleness. She would threaten to destroy herself--and so he would save her! She would bid him cast her away--and so he would stand by her to the end! And the end would be simply the withering and shrivelling of those radiant qualities which he called his genius--qualities which were so precious to him, but about which Nature knew nothing!

So grim an aspect had life come to wear to this boy of twenty-one!

He stripped all the flesh of illusion from its fair face, and saw the grinning skull beneath. And he mocked at himself, because of all those virtues by which he had been caught--and which yet he knew were stronger than his will. Through faith and love he had been made a captive; and through faith and love would he waste away and perish!

Section 5. Meantime, Corydon was prosecuting an inquiry into these matters upon her own account, and getting at quite other points of view. There were some, it seemed, who took this game less seriously than she and Thyrsis; and these managed to go free--they broke the cords of the Snare, they slipped between the fingers of the hand of Fate. Corydon had heard a certain scientist refer to man as "Nature's insurgent son"; and now came the discovery that Nature had insurgent daughters also.

Being in an "interesting condition," Corydon was entitled to the confidences of the married women acquaintances of the family. They were eager to know all about her, and what she was going to do; and they told her their own experiences. She brought these to Thyrsis, who was thus admitted to a view of the inner workings of the "race-suicide" mill.

It was as the doctor had said; each one of these middle-class ladies considered herself a special case, but their stories all seemed to fit together. Nature's boundless and irrational fecundity was an exceedingly trying feature of the life of middle-class ladies. In the first place, the having of babies was a tedious and painful matter. One became grotesquely disfigured, and had to hide away and sever all social relationships. One lost one's grace and attractiveness, and hence the power to hold one's husband. And then, there were all the cares and the inconveniences of children. What was one to do with them, in a city where the best hotels and apartment-houses barred them out?

Then, too, even supposing the best of intentions--there was the cost of living. At present prices it was impossible for a man who had only a salary to support more than one or two children; and with prices increasing as they were, one could not be sure of educating even these. And meanwhile, the Nature of Things had apparently planned it that a woman should bear a child once a year for half her life-time!

So all these middle-class ladies used devices to prevent conception. But these were not always successful--husbands were frequently inconsiderate. And so came the abortion-business, which the doctor had described as the curse of the age.

Now and then one could accomplish the thing by some of the innumerable drugs that were advertised for the purpose. But these always made one ill, and seldom did anything else. Corydon met one young person, the wife of a rising stockbroker, who had presented her husband with twins in the first year of their marriage, and who declared that she was apparently designed to populate all the tenements in the city. This airy and vivacious young lady lay back in her automobile and prattled to Corydon, declaring that she was "always in trouble." She had tried to coax her family physician in vain, and had finally gone elsewhere. She had got quite used to the experience. All that troubled her nowadays was how to make excuses

to her friends. one could not have "appendicitis" forever!

But there was another side to the matter. There was one woman who had had a hemorrhage; and another whose sister had contracted blood-poisoning, and had died in agony. There were even some who pleaded and exhorted like the doctor, and talked about the thing's being murder. All of which arguments and fears Corydon brought to her husband, to be pondered and discussed.

They spent whole days wandering about in the park in agony of soul. They had one brief month in which to decide the question--the question of life or death to the possible child. Truly here, once more, was an issue to which Thyrsis might apply the words of Carlyle--

"Choose well, your choice is
Brief and yet endless!"

Section 6. This was also the month in which the fate of the book was decided. Each day, as he went for the mail, Thyrsis' heart would beat high with expectation; and each day he would be chilled with bitter disappointment. He was still hoping for a real review, or for some signs of the book's "catching on". Nor did he finally give up until he chanced to have a talk about it with his friend, Mr. Ardsley; who explained to him that here, too, he had fallen into a trap.

His "publishers" were not really publishers at all. They did not make their profit by selling books--they made it out of authors. There were many vain and foolish people who wrote books which they were anxious to see in print, so that they might be known as literary lights among their friends. Many of them had money, and would buy a number of copies; and the "publishers" had the expenses guaranteed in advance and so would make a profit upon the sale of even one or two hundred copies. All this being well known, the reviews never paid any attention to the announcements of this concern, nor did "the trade" handle their books. As for Thyrsis' volume, they had printed it very cheaply--it was to be doubted if it had cost them what he had paid them. And they had even published it as a "net price" book--thereby taking three cents more off the royalty to which he was entitled!

Mr. Ardsley had declared that he would be lucky if his book sold three hundred copies; and so he felt that it was quite a tribute to the merits of his work when, after six months more of waiting, he received a royalty statement from the concern showing a sale of seven hundred and forty-three copies, and enclosing a check for eight-nine dollars and sixteen cents. This check Thyrsis paid over to his rich relative, and a week or two later, when he sold a short story, he sent the balance of the hundred dollars that he owed. And so he figured that the privilege of writing his first book and offering it to the hundred great men of letters of the country, had cost him the sum of one hundred and thirty-five dollars and eighty-four cents!

Meantime, of course, Thyrsis was hearing from these great men of letters. When he counted up at the end he found that he had received replies from sixteen of them; whether the other eighty-four received his book, or what they did with it, he never knew. Of these sixteen,

six wrote formal acknowledgements, and two others said that they found nothing to appeal to them in his book; so there were left eight who gave him comfort, Several of these were among the really vital men of the time, as Thyrsis found out later, when he came to read their books, and to know them as something other than newspaper names. Several of them wrote him long and really helpful criticisms of his work, recognizing the merits he knew it had, and pointing out defects which he was quick to acknowledge. Four of them even told him that he had undoubted genius, and predicted great things for him. But that was as far as any of them went. They wrote their opinions, and there they stopped, as if at a blank wall. No one among them seemed to feel that he could take any action upon his opinion, however favorable; not one comprehended that what the boy was groping for was neither praise nor blame, but a chance for life. Not one had any advice of a practical sort to offer; not one had any personal or human thing to say; not one even asked to see him! And lest this should be due to oversight, or to false delicacy, Thyrsis wrote, in his desperation, and reminded them that the "genius" they recognized was being killed by starvation. To this, one did not reply, and another advised him to take up newspaper work, as "a means of getting in touch with the public"!

It was a ghastly thing to the boy as he came to realize it--this utter deadness and coldness of "the world". Thyrsis himself was all afire with love--with love, not only for his vision and his art, but for all humanity, and for humanity's noblest dreams. His friends were poets and sages of past time, men of generous faith and quick sympathies; and in all the world of the living, was there not one such man to be found? Was there nothing left upon earth but critical discernment and epistolary politeness?

The question pursued him still more, after the one interview which resulted from all this correspondence. There was a distinguished Harvard professor who had told him that he had rare powers and must go on; and hearing that the professor was in New York, Thyrsis asked the privilege of calling.

It was in one of the city's most expensive hotels--for the professor had married a rich wife, and was what people called "socially prominent". The other did not know this; but it seemed an awful thing to him that anyone should be sitting in a brocaded silk-covered chair in a palace of luxury like this, while possessed of the knowledge that his genius was starving.

"You tell me to go on, professor," he said. "But how _can_ I go on?"

The professor was fingering his gold eyeglasses and studying his visitor.

"You must get some kind of routine work," he declared--"enough to support you. You can't expect to live by your writing."

"But if I do that, I can't write!" cried Thyrsis.

"You'll have to do the best you can," said the other.

"But I can't do _anything!_ The emotions of it eat me all up. I daren't even let myself think about my work when I have to do other things."

"I should think," commented the professor, "that you would find you are still more hindered by the uncertainties of hack-work."

"I do find that," the boy replied. "That is just what is the matter with me."

"I'm afraid you'll be forced to a compromise in the end."

"But I won't! I won't!" cried Thyrsis, wildly. "I will starve first!"

The other said nothing.

"Or I will beg!" added Thyrsis.

The other's look clouded slightly--as the boy, with his quick sensitiveness, noted instantly. "Of course," said the professor, "if you are not ashamed to do that--"

"But why should I be ashamed? Greater men than I have begged for their art."

"Yes. I know that. And naturally--I honor that feeling in you. If you have that much fervor--why, of course, you will do it. But I'm afraid you'll find it a humiliating experience."

"I wouldn't expect to find it a picnic," answered Thyrsis, and took his departure--having perceived that the professor's leading thought was a fear lest he should begin his begging that day.

So there it was! There was the eminent critic, the writer of exquisite appreciations of literature! The darling of the

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