

A misty swamp scene with tall reeds and trees reflected in the water. The image has a teal and grey color palette, giving it a somber and atmospheric feel. The text is overlaid on black rounded rectangles at the top and bottom.

***HARRIET
BEECHER STOWE***

***DRED: A TALE
OF THE GREAT
DISMAL SWAMP***

A misty swamp scene with tall reeds and trees reflected in the water. The image has a teal and grey color palette, with a foggy atmosphere. The reeds are in the foreground, and the trees are in the background, their reflections visible in the calm water.

***HARRIET
BEECHER STOWE***

***DRED: A TALE
OF THE GREAT
DISMAL SWAMP***

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp

EAN 8596547022596

DigiCat, 2022

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PREFACE.

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The writer of this book has chosen, once more, a subject from the scenes and incidents of the slave-holding states.

The reason for such a choice is two-fold. First, in a merely artistic point of view, there is no ground, ancient or modern, whose vivid lights, gloomy shadows, and grotesque groupings, afford to the novelist so wide a scope for the exercise of his powers. In the near vicinity of modern civilization of the most matter-of-fact kind exist institutions which carry us back to the twilight of the feudal ages, with all their exciting possibilities of incident. Two nations, the types of two exactly opposite styles of existence, are here struggling; and from the intermingling of these two a third race has arisen, and the three are interlocked in wild and singular relations, that evolve every possible combination of romance.

Hence, if the writer's only object had been the production of a work of art, she would have felt justified in not turning aside from that mine whose inexhaustible stores have but begun to be developed.

But this object, however legitimate, was not the only nor the highest one. It is the moral bearings of the subject involved which have had the chief influence in its selection.

The issues presented by the great conflict between liberty and slavery do not grow less important from year to year. On the contrary, their interest increases with every step in the development of the national career. Never has

there been a crisis in the history of this nation so momentous as the present. If ever a nation was raised up by Divine Providence, and led forth upon a conspicuous stage, as if for the express purpose of solving a great moral problem in the sight of all mankind, it is this nation. God in his providence is now asking the American people, Is the system of slavery, as set forth in the American slave code, *right*? Is it so desirable, that you will directly establish it over broad regions, where, till now, you have solemnly forbidden it to enter? And this question the American people are about to answer. Under such circumstances the writer felt that no apology was needed for once more endeavoring to do something towards revealing to the people the true character of that system. If the people are to establish such a system, let them do it with their eyes open, with all the dreadful realities before them.

One liberty has been taken which demands acknowledgment in the outset. The writer has placed in the mouth of one of her leading characters a judicial decision of Judge Ruffin, of North Carolina, the boldness, clearness, and solemn eloquence of which have excited admiration both in the Old World and the New. The author having no personal acquaintance with that gentleman, the character to whom she attributes it is to be considered as created merely on a principle of artistic fitness.

To maintain the unity of the story, some anachronisms with regard to the time of the session of courts have been allowed; for works of fiction must sometimes use some liberties in the grouping of incidents.

But as mere cold art, unquickened by sympathy with the spirit of the age, is nothing, the author hopes that those who now are called to struggle for all that is noble in our laws and institutions may find in this book the response of a sympathizing heart.



CHAPTER I. THE MISTRESS OF CANEMA.

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"Bills, Harry?—Yes.—Dear me, where are they?—There!—No. Here?—Oh, look!—What do you think of this scarf? Isn't it lovely?"

"Yes, Miss Nina, beautiful—but"—

"Oh, those bills!—Yes—well, here goes—here—perhaps in this box. No—that's my opera-hat. By the bye, what do you think of that? Isn't that bunch of silver wheat lovely? Stop a bit—you shall see it on me."

And, with these words, the slight little figure sprang up as if it had wings, and, humming a waltzing-tune, skimmed across the room to a looking-glass, and placed the jaunty little cap on the gay little head, and then, turning a pirouette on one toe, said, "There, now!"

"There, now!" Ah, Harry! ah, mankind generally! the wisest of you have been made fools of by just such dancing, glittering, fluttering little assortments of curls, pendants, streamers, eyes, cheeks, and dimples!

The little figure, scarce the height of the Venus, rounded as that of an infant, was shown to advantage by a coquettish morning-dress of buff muslin, which fluttered open in front to display the embroidered skirt, and trim little mouse of a slipper. The face was one of those provoking ones which set criticism at defiance. The hair, waving, curling, dancing hither and thither, seemed to have a wild, laughing grace of its own; the brown eyes twinkled like the pendants of a chandelier; the little, wicked nose, which bore the forbidden upward curve, seemed to assert its right to do

so with a saucy freedom; and the pendants of multiplied brilliants that twinkled in her ears, and the nodding wreath of silver wheat that set off her opera-hat, seemed alive with mischief and motion.

"Well, what do you think?" said a lively, imperative voice, —just the kind of voice that you might have expected from the figure.

The young man to whom this question was addressed was a well-dressed, gentlemanly person of about thirty-five, with dark complexion and hair, and deep, full blue eyes. There was something marked and peculiar in the square, high forehead, and the finely-formed features, which indicated talent and ability; and the blue eyes had a depth and strength of color that might cause them at first glance to appear black. The face, with its strongly-marked expression of honesty and sense, had about it many careworn and thoughtful lines. He looked at the little, defiant fay for a moment with an air of the most entire deference and admiration; then a heavy shadow crossed his face, and he answered, abstractedly, "Yes, Miss Nina, everything you wear becomes pretty—and that is perfectly charming."

"Isn't it, now, Harry? I thought you would think so. You see, it's my own idea. You ought to have seen what a thing it was when I first saw it in Mme. Le Blanche's window. There was a great hot-looking feather on it, and two or three horrid bows. I had them out in a twinkling, and got this wheat in—which shakes so, you know. It's perfectly lovely!—Well, do you believe, the very night I wore it to the opera, I got engaged?"

"Engaged, Miss Nina?"

"Engaged!—Yes, to be sure! Why not?"

"It seems to me that's a very serious thing, Miss Nina."

"Serious!—ha! ha! ha!" said the little beauty, seating herself on one arm of the sofa, and shaking the glittering hat back from her eyes. "Well, I fancy it was—to him, at least. I made him serious, I can tell you!"

"But is this true, Miss Nina? *Are* you really engaged?"

"Yes, to be sure I am—to three gentlemen; and going to stay so till I find which I like best. May be, you know, I shan't like any of them."

"Engaged to three gentlemen, Miss Nina?"

"To be sure!—Can't you understand English, Harry? I *am* now—fact."

"Miss Nina, is that right?"

"Right?—why not? I don't know which to take—I positively don't; so I took them all on trial, you know."

"Pray, Miss Nina, tell us who they are."

"Well, there's Mr. Carson;—he's a rich old bachelor—horridly polite—one of those little, bobbing men, that always have such shiny dickies and collars, and such bright boots, and such tight straps. And he's rich—and perfectly wild about me. He wouldn't take no for an answer, you know; so I just said yes, to have a little quiet. Besides, he is very convenient about the opera and concerts, and such things."

"Well, and the next?"

"Well, the next is George Emmons. He's one of your pink-and-white men, you know, who look like cream-candy, as if they were good to eat. He's a lawyer, of a good family,—thought a good deal of, and all that. Well, really, they say he

has talents—I'm no judge. I know he always bores me to death; asking me if I have read this or that—marking places in books that I never read. He's your sentimental sort—writes the most romantic notes on pink paper, and all that sort of thing."

"And the third?"

"Well, you see, I don't like *him* a bit—I'm sure I don't. He's a hateful creature! He isn't handsome; he's proud as Lucifer; and I'm sure I don't know how he got me to be engaged. It was a kind of an accident. He's real good, though—too good for me, that's a fact. But, then, I'm afraid of him a little."

"And his name?"

"Well, his name is Clayton—Mr. Edward Clayton, at your service. He's one of your high-and-mighty people—with such deep-set eyes—eyes that look as if they were in a cave—and such black hair! And his eyes have a desperate sort of sad look, sometimes—quite Byronic. He's tall, and rather loose-jointed—has beautiful teeth; his mouth, too, is—well, when he smiles, sometimes it really is quite fascinating; and then he's so different from other gentlemen! He's kind—but he don't care how he dresses; and wears the most horrid shoes. And, then, he isn't polite—he won't jump, you know, to pick up your thread or scissors; and sometimes he'll get into a brown study, and let you stand ten minutes before he thinks to give you a chair, and all such provoking things. He isn't a bit of a lady's man. Well, consequence is, as my lord won't court the girls, the girls all court my lord—that's the way, you know; and they seem to think it's such a feather in their cap to get attention from him—because, you know, he's horrid sensible. So, you see, that just set me out to see

what I could do with him. Well, you see, I wouldn't court him;—and I plagued him, and laughed at him, and spited him, and got him gloriously wroth; and he said some spiteful things about me, and then I said some more about him, and we had a real up-and-down quarrel;—and then I took a penitent turn, you know, and just went gracefully down into the valley of humiliation—as we witches can; and it took wonderfully—brought my lord on to his knees before he knew what he was doing. Well, really, I don't know what was the matter, just then, but he spoke so earnest and strong that actually he got me to crying—hateful creature!—and I promised all sorts of things, you know—said altogether more than will bear thinking of."

"And are you corresponding with all these lovers, Miss Nina?"

"Yes— isn't it fun? Their letters, you know, can't speak. If they could, when they come rustling together in the bag, wouldn't there be a muss?"

"Miss Nina, I think you have given your heart to this last one."

"Oh, nonsense, Harry! Haven't got any heart!—don't care two pins for any of them! All I want is to have a good time. As to love, and all that, I don't believe I could love any of them; I should be tired to death of any of them in six weeks. I never liked anything that long."

"Miss Nina, you must excuse me, but I want to ask again, is it right to trifle with the feelings of gentlemen in this way?"

"Why not?—Isn't all fair in war? Don't they trifle with us girls, every chance they get—and sit up so pompous in their

rooms, and smoke cigars, and talk us over, as if they only had to put out their finger and say, 'Come here,' to get any of us? I tell you, it's fun to bring them down!—Now, there's that horrid George Emmons—I tell you, if he didn't flirt all winter with Mary Stephens, and got everybody to laughing about her!—it was so evident, you see, that she liked him—she couldn't help showing it, poor little thing!—and then my lord would settle his collar, and say he hadn't quite made up his mind to take her, and all that. Well, I haven't made up my mind to take him, either—and so poor Emma is avenged. As to the old bach—that smooth-dicky man—you see, he can't be hurt; for his heart is rubbed as smooth and hard as his dicky, with falling in love and out again. He's been turned off by three girls, now; and his shoes squeak as brisk as ever, and he's just as jolly. You see, he didn't use to be so rich. Lately, he's come into a splendid property; so, if I don't take him, poor man, there are enough that would be glad of him."

"Well, then, but as to that other one?"

"What! my lord Lofty? Oh, he wants humbling!—it wouldn't hurt him, in the least, to be put down a little. He's good, too, and afflictions always improve good people. I believe I was made for a means of grace to 'em all."

"Miss Nina, what if all three of them should come at once—or even two of them?"

"What a droll idea! Wouldn't it be funny? Just to think of it! What a commotion! What a scene! It would really be vastly entertaining."

"Now, Miss Nina, I want to speak as a friend."

"No, you shan't! it is just what people say when they are going to say something disagreeable. I told Clayton, once for all, that I wouldn't have him speak as a friend to me."

"Pray, how does he take all this?"

"Take it! Why, just as he must. He cares a great deal more for me than I do for him." Here a slight little sigh escaped the fair speaker. "And I think it fun to shock him. You know he is one of the fatherly sort, who is always advising young girls. Let it be understood that his standard of female character is wonderfully high, and all that. And then, to think of his being tripped up before me!—it's *too* funny!" The little sprite here took off her opera-hat, and commenced waltzing a few steps, and, stopping midwhirl, exclaimed: "Oh, do you know we girls have been trying to learn the cachucha, and I've got some castanets? Let me see—where are they?" And with this she proceeded to upset the trunk, from which flew a meteoric shower of bracelets, billets-doux, French Grammars, drawing-pencils, interspersed with confectionery of various descriptions, and all the et ceteras of a school-girl's depository. "There, upon my word, there are the bills you were asking for. There, take them!" throwing a package of papers at the young man. "Take them! Can you catch?"

"Miss Nina, these do not appear to be bills."

"Oh, bless me! those are love-letters, then. The bills are somewhere." And the little hands went pawing among the heap making the fanciful collection fly in every direction over the carpet. "Ah! I believe now in this bonbon-box I did put them. Take care of your head, Harry!" And, with the word, the gilded missile flew from the little hand, and

opening on the way, showered Harry with a profusion of crumpled papers. "Now you have got them all, except one, that I used for curl-papers the other night. Oh, don't look so sober about it! Indeed, I kept the pieces—here they are. And now don't you say, Harry, don't you tell me that I never save my bills. You don't know how particular I have been, and what trouble I have taken. But, there—there's a letter Clayton wrote to me, one time when we had a quarrel. Just a specimen of that creature!"

"Pray tell us about it, Miss Nina," said the young man, with his eyes fixed admiringly on the little person, while he was smoothing and arranging the crumpled documents.

"Why, you see, it was just this way. You know, these men—how provoking they are! They'll go and read all sorts of books—no matter what *they* read!—and then they are so dreadfully particular about us girls. Do you know, Harry, this always made me angry?"

"Well, so, you see, one evening Sophy Elliot quoted some poetry from Don Juan,—I never read it, but it seems folks call it a bad book,—and my lord Clayton immediately fixed his eyes upon her in such an appalling way, and says, 'Have you read Don Juan, Miss Elliot?' Then, you know, as girls always do in such cases, she blushed and stammered, and said her brother had read some extracts from it to her. I was vexed, and said, 'And, pray, what's the harm if she did read it? / mean to read it, the very first chance I get!'

"Oh! everybody looked so shocked. Why, dear me! if I had said I was going to commit murder, Clayton could not have looked more concerned. So he put on that very edifying air of his, and said, 'Miss Nina, I *trust*, as your

friend, that you will not read that book. I should lose all respect for a lady friend who had read that.'

"Have you read it, Mr. Clayton?' said I.

"Yes, Miss Nina,' said he, quite piously.

"What makes you read such bad books?' said I, very innocently.

"Then there followed a general fuss and talk; and the gentlemen, you know, would not have their wives or their sisters read anything naughty, for the world. They wanted us all to be like snow-flakes, and all that. And they were quite high, telling they wouldn't marry this, and they wouldn't marry that, till at last I made them a curtsey, and said, 'Gentlemen, we ladies are infinitely obliged to you, but we don't intend to marry people that read naughty books, either. Of course you know snow-flakes don't like smut!'

"Now, I really didn't mean anything by it, except to put down these men, and stand up for my sex. But Clayton took it in real earnest. He grew red and grew pale, and was just as angry as he could be. Well, the quarrel raged about three days. Then, do you know, I made him give up, and own that he was in the wrong. There, I think he was, too,—don't you? Don't you think men ought to be *as good as we are*, any way?"

"Miss Nina, I should think you would be afraid to express yourself so positively."

"Oh, if I cared a sou for any of them, perhaps I should. But there isn't one of the train that I would give *that* for!" said she, flirting a shower of peanut-shells into the air.

"Yes, but, Miss Nina, some time or other you must marry somebody. You need somebody to take care of the property

and place."

"Oh, that's it, is it? You are tired of keeping accounts, are you, with me to spend the money? Well, I don't wonder. How I pity anybody that keeps accounts! Isn't it horrid, Harry? Those awful books! Do you know that Mme. Ardaine set out that 'we girls' should keep account of our expenses? I just tried it two weeks. I had a headache and weak eyes, and actually it nearly ruined my constitution. Somehow or other, they gave it up, it gave them so much trouble. And what's the use? When money's spent, it's *spent*; and keeping accounts ever so strict won't get it back. I am very careful about my expenses. I never get anything that I can do without."

"For instance," said Harry, rather roguishly, "this bill of one hundred dollars for confectionery."

"Well, you know just how it is, Harry. It's so horrid to have to study! Girls must have something. And you know I didn't get it all for myself; I gave it round to all the girls. Then they used to ask me for it, and I couldn't refuse—and so it went."

"I didn't presume to comment, Miss Nina. What have we here?—Mme. Les Cartes, \$450?"

"Oh, Harry, that horrid Mme. Les Cartes! You never saw anything like her! Positively it is not my fault. She puts down things I never got: I know she does. Nothing in the world but because she is from Paris. Everybody is complaining of her. But, then, nobody gets anything anywhere else. So what can one do, you know? I assure you, Harry, I am economical."

The young man, who had been summing up the accounts, now burst out into such a hearty laugh as somewhat disconcerted the fair rhetorician.

She colored to her temples.

"Harry, now, for shame! Positively, you aren't respectful!"

"Oh, Miss Nina, on my knees I beg pardon!" still continuing to laugh; "but, indeed, you must excuse me. I am positively delighted to hear of your economy, Miss Nina."

"Well, now, Harry, you may look at the bills and see. Haven't I ripped up all my silk dresses and had them colored over, just to economize? You can see the dyer's bill, there; and Mme. Carteau told me she always expected to turn my dresses twice, at least. Oh, yes, I have been very economical."

"I have heard of old dresses turned costing more than new ones, Miss Nina."

"Oh, nonsense, Harry! What should you know of girls' things? But I'll tell you one thing I've got, Harry, and that is a gold watch for you. There it is," throwing a case carelessly towards him; "and there's a silk dress for your wife," throwing him a little parcel. "I have sense enough to know what a good fellow you are, at any rate. I couldn't go on as I do, if you didn't rack your poor head fifty ways to keep things going straight here at home for me."

A host of conflicting emotions seemed to cross the young man's face, like a shadow of clouds over a field, as he silently undid the packages. His hands trembled, his lips quivered, but he said nothing.

"Come, Harry, don't this suit you? I thought it would."

"Miss Nina, you are too kind."

"No, I'm not, Harry; I am a selfish little concern, that's a fact," said she, turning away, and pretending not to see the feeling which agitated him.

"But, Harry, wasn't it droll, this morning, when all our people came up to get their presents! There was Aunt Sue, and Aunt Tike, and Aunt Kate, each one got a new sack pattern, in which they are going to make up the prints I brought them. In about two days our place will be flaming with aprons and sacks. And *did* you see Aunt Rose in that pink bonnet, with the flowers? You could see every tooth in her head! Of course, now they'll be taken with a very pious streak, to go to some camp-meeting or other, to show their finery. Why don't you laugh, Harry?"

"I do, don't I, Miss Nina?"

"You only laugh on your face. You don't laugh deep down. What's the matter? I don't believe it's good for you to read and study so much. Papa used to say that he didn't think it was good for"—

She stopped, checked by the expression on the face of her listener.

"For *servants*, Miss Nina, your papa said, I suppose."

With the quick tact of her sex, Nina perceived that she had struck some disagreeable chord in the mind of her faithful attendant, and she hastened to change the subject, in her careless, rattling way.

"Why, yes, Harry, study is horrid for you, or me either, or anybody else, except musty old people, who don't know how to do anything else. Did ever anybody look out of doors, such a pleasant day as this, and want to study? Think of a bird's studying, now, or a bee! They don't study—they live. Now, I don't want to study—I want to live. So now, Harry, if you'll just get the ponies and go in the woods, I want to get some jessamines, and spring beauties, and wild

honeysuckles, and all the rest of the flowers that I used to get before I went to school."



CHAPTER II. CLAYTON.

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The curtain rises on our next scene, and discovers a tranquil library, illuminated by the slant rays of the afternoon's sun. On one side the room opened by long glass windows on to a garden, from whence the air came in perfumed with the breath of roses and honeysuckles. The floor covered with white matting, the couches and sofas robed in smooth glazed linen, gave an air of freshness and coolness to the apartment. The walls were hung with prints of the great masterpieces of European art, while bronzes and plaster-casts, distributed with taste and skill, gave evidence of artistic culture in the general arrangement. Two young men were sitting together near the opened window at a small table, which displayed an antique coffee-set of silver, and a silver tray of ices and fruits. One of these has already been introduced to the notice of our readers, in the description of our heroine in the last chapter.

Edward Clayton, the only son of Judge Clayton, and representative of one of the oldest and most distinguished families of North Carolina, was in personal appearance much what our lively young friend had sketched—tall, slender, with a sort of loose-jointedness and carelessness of dress, which might have produced an impression of clownishness, had it not been relieved by a refined and intellectual expression on the head and face. The upper part of the face gave the impression of thoughtfulness and strength, with a shadowing of melancholy earnestness, and there was about the eye, in conversation, that occasional

gleam of troubled wildness which betrays the hypochondriac temperament. The mouth was even feminine in the delicacy and beauty of its lines, and the smile which sometimes played around it had a peculiar fascination. It seemed to be a smile of but half the man's nature; for it never rose as high as the eyes, or seemed to disturb the dark stillness of their thoughtfulness.

The other speaker was in many respects a contrast; and we will introduce him to our readers by the name of Frank Russel. Furthermore, for their benefit, we will premise that he was the only son of a once distinguished and wealthy, but now almost decayed, family of Virginia.

It is supposed by many that friendship is best founded upon similarity of nature; but observation teaches that it is more common by a union of opposites, in which each party is attracted by something wanting in itself. In Clayton, the great preponderance of those faculties which draw a man inward, and impair the efficiency of the outward life, inclined him to overvalue the active and practical faculties, because he saw them constantly attended with a kind of success which he fully appreciated, but was unable to attain. Perfect ease of manner, ready presence of mind under all social exigencies, adroitness in making the most of passing occurrences, are qualities which are seldom the gift of sensitive and deeply-thoughtful natures, and which for this very reason they are often disposed to overvalue. Russel was one of those men who have just enough of all the higher faculties to appreciate their existence in others, and not enough of any one to disturb the perfect availability of his own mind. Everything in his mental furnishing was

always completely under his own control, and on hand for use at a moment's notice. From infancy he was noted for quick tact and ready reply. At school he was the universal factotum, the "good fellow" of the ring, heading all the mischief among the boys, and yet walking with exemplary gravity on the blind side of the master. Many a scrape had he rescued Clayton from, into which he had fallen from a more fastidious moral sense, a more scrupulous honor, than is for worldly profit either in the boy's or man's sphere; and Clayton, superior as he was, could not help loving and depending on him.

The diviner part of man is often shamefaced and self-distrustful, ill at home in this world, and standing in awe of nothing so much as what is called common sense; and yet common sense very often, by its own keenness, is able to see that these unavailable currencies of another's mind are of more worth, if the world only knew it, than the ready coin of its own; and so the practical and the ideal nature are drawn together.

So Clayton and Russel had been friends from boyhood; had roomed together their four years in college; and, though instruments of a vastly different quality, had hitherto played the concerts of life with scarce a discord.

In person, Russel was of about the medium size, with a well-knit, elastic frame, all whose movements were characterized by sprightliness and energy. He had a frank, open countenance, clear blue eyes, a high forehead shaded by clusters of curling brown hair; his flexible lips wore a good-natured yet half-sarcastic smile. His feelings, though not inconveniently deep, were easily touched; he could be

moved to tears or to smiles, with the varying humor of a friend; but never so far as to lose his equipoise—or, as he phrased it, forget what he was about.

But we linger too long in description. We had better let the reader hear the *dramatis personæ*, and judge for himself.

"Well, now, Clayton," said Russel, as he leaned back in a stuffed leather chair, with a cigar between his fingers, "how considerate of them to go off on that marooning party, and leave us to ourselves, here! I say, old boy, how goes the world now?—Reading law, hey?—booked to be Judge Clayton the second! Now, my dear fellow, if I had the opportunities that you have—only to step into my father's shoes—I should be a lucky fellow."

"Well, you are welcome to all my chances," said Clayton, throwing himself on one of the lounges; "for I begin to see that I shall make very little of them."

"Why, what's the matter?—Don't you like the study?"

"The study, perhaps, well enough—but not the practice. Reading the theory is always magnificent and grand. 'Law hath her seat in the bosom of God; her voice is the harmony of the world.' You remember we used to declaim that. But, then, come to the practice of it, and what do you find? Are legal examinations anything like searching after truth? Does not an advocate commit himself to one-sided views of his subject, and habitually ignore all the truth on the other side? Why, if I practised law according to my conscience, I should be chased out of court in a week."

"There you are, again, Clayton, with your everlasting conscience, which has been my plague ever since you were

a boy, and I have never been able to convince you what a humbug it is! It's what I call a *crotchety* conscience—always in the way of your doing anything like anybody else. I suppose, then, of course, you won't go into political life.—Great pity, too. You'd make a very imposing figure as senator. You have exactly the cut for a conscript father—one of the old Viri Romæ."

"And what do you think the old Viri Romæ would do in Washington? What sort of a figure do you think Regulus, or Quintus Curtius, or Mucius Scævola, would make there?"

"Well, to be sure, the style of political action has altered somewhat since those days. If political duties were what they were then,—if a gulf would open in Washington, for example,—you would be the fellow to plunge in, horse and all, for the good of the republic; or, if anything was to be done by putting your right hand in the fire and burning it off—or, if there were any Carthaginians who would cut off your eyelids, or roll you down hill in a barrel of nails, for truth and your country's sake,—you would be on hand for any such matter. That's the sort of foreign embassy that you would be after. All these old-fashioned goings on would suit you to a T; but as to figuring in purple and fine linen, in Paris or London, as American minister, you would make a dismal business of it. But still, I thought you might practise law in a wholesome, sensible way,—take fees, make pleas with abundance of classical allusions, show off your scholarship, marry a rich wife, and make your children princes in the gates—all without treading on the toes of your too sensitive moral what-d'-ye-call-ems. But you've done one thing like other folks, at least, if all 's true that I've heard."

"And what is that, pray?"

"What's that? Hear the fellow, now! How innocent we are! I suppose you think I haven't heard of your campaign in New York—carrying off that princess of little flirts, Miss Gordon."

Clayton responded to the charge only with a slight shrug and a smile, in which not only his lips but his eyes took part, while the color mounted to his forehead.

"Now, do you know, Clayton," continued Russel, "I *like* that. Do you know I always thought I should detest the woman that you should fall in love with? It seemed to me that such a portentous combination of all the virtues as you were planning for would be something like a comet—an alarming spectacle. Do you remember (I should like to know, if you do) just what that woman was to be?—was to have all the learning of a man, all the graces of a woman (I think I have it by heart); she was to be practical, poetical, pious, and everything else that begins with a *p*; she was to be elegant and earnest; take deep and extensive views of life; and there was to be a certain air about her, half Madonna, half Venus, made of every creature's best. Ah, bless us! what poor creatures we are! Here comes along our little coquette, flirting, tossing her fan; picks you up like a great solid chip, as you are, and throws you into her chip-basket of beaux, and goes on dancing and flirting as before. Aren't you ashamed of it, now?"

"No. I am really much like the minister in our town, where we fitted for college, who married a pretty Polly Peters in his sixtieth year, and, when the elders came to inquire if she had the requisite qualifications for a pastor's lady, he told

them that he didn't think she had. 'But the fact is, brethren,' said he, 'though I don't pretend she is a saint, she is a very pretty little sinner, *and I love her.*' That's just my case."

"Very sensibly said; and, do you know, as I told you before, I'm perfectly delighted with it, because it is acting like other folks. But then, my dear fellow, do you think you have come to anything really solid with this little Venus of the sea-foam? Isn't it much the same as being engaged to a cloud, or a butterfly? One wants a little *streak* of reality about a person that one must take for better or for worse. You have a deep nature, Clayton. You really want a wife who will have some glimmering perception of the difference between you and the other things that walk and wear coats, and are called men."

"Well, then, really," said Clayton, rousing himself, and speaking with energy, "I'll tell you just what it is: Nina Gordon is a flirt and a coquette—a spoiled child, if you will. She is not at all the person I ever expected would obtain any power over me. She has no culture, no reading, no habits of reflection; but she has, after all, a certain tone and quality to her, a certain '*timbre*,' as the French say of voices, which suits me. There is about her a mixture of energy, individuality, and shrewdness, which makes her, all uninformed as she is, more piquant and attractive than any woman I ever fell in with. She never reads; it is almost impossible to get her to read; but, if you can catch her ear for five minutes, her literary judgments have a peculiar freshness and truth. And so with her judgment on all other subjects, if you can stop her long enough to give you an opinion. As to heart, I think she has yet a wholly

unawakened nature. She has lived only in the world of sensation, and that is so abundant and so buoyant in her that the deeper part still sleeps. It is only two or three times that I have seen a flash of this under nature look from her eyes, and color her voice and intonation. And I believe—I'm quite sure—that I am the only person in the world that ever touched it at all. I'm not at all sure that she loves me *now*; but I'm almost equally sure that she will."

"They say," said Russel, carelessly, "that she is generally engaged to two or three at a time."

"That may be also," said Clayton, indolently. "I rather suspect it to be the case now, but it gives me no concern. I've seen all the men by whom she is surrounded, and I know perfectly well there's not one of them that she cares a rush for."

"Well, but, my dear fellow, how can your extra fastidious moral notions stand the idea of her practising this system of deception?"

"Why, of course, it isn't a thing to my taste; but then, like the old parson, if I love the 'little sinner,' what am I to do? I suppose you think it a lover's paradox; yet I assure you, though she deceives, she is not deceitful; though she acts selfishly, she is not selfish. The fact is, the child has grown up, *motherless* and an heiress, among servants. She has, I believe, a sort of an aunt, or some such relative, who nominally represents the head of the family to the eye of the world. But I fancy little madam has had full sway. Then she has been to a fashionable New York boarding-school, and that has developed the talent of shirking lessons, and evading rules, with a taste for sidewalk flirtation. These are