
FRANCES
HODGSON
BURNETT
THROUGH ONE
ADMINISTRATION

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Through One Administration

EAN 8596547246909

DigiCat, 2022
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Table of Contents

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

Eight years before the Administration rendered important by the series of events and incidents which form the present story, there had come to Washington, on a farewell visit to a distant relative with whom he was rather a favorite, a young officer who was on the point of leaving the civilized world for a far-away Western military station. The name of the young officer was Philip Tredennis. His relative and entertainer was a certain well-known entomologist, whom it will be safe to call Professor Herrick. At the Smithsonian and in all scientific circles, Professor Herrick's name was a familiar one. He was considered an enviable as well as an able man. He had established himself in Washington because he found men there whose tastes and pursuits were congenial with his own, and because the softness of the climate suited him; he was rich enough to be free from all anxiety and to enjoy the delightful liberty of pursuing his scientific labors because they were his pleasure, and not because he was dependent upon their results. He had a quiet and charming home, an excellent matter-of-fact wife, and one daughter, who was being educated in a northern city, and who was said to be as bright and attractive as one could wish a young creature to be.

Of this daughter Tredennis had known very little, except that she enjoyed an existence and came home at long intervals for the holidays, when it did not happen that she was sent to the sea or the mountains with her mother instead.

The professor himself seemed to know but little of her. He was a quiet and intensely studious person, taking small interest in the ordinary world and appearing always slightly surprised when his wife spoke to him; still, his manner toward her was as gentle and painstaking as if she had been the rarest possible beetle, and the only one of her species to be found in any known collection, though perhaps the interest she awakened in him was not so great as it might have been under such exceptionally favorable circumstances. She was not a brilliant or far-seeing woman, and her opinions of entomology and, indeed, of science in general, were vague, and obscured by objections to small boxes, glass cases, long pins, and chloroform, and specimens of all orders.

So, observing this, Tredennis felt it not at all unnatural that he should not hear much of his daughter from the professor. Why his relative liked him the young man was not at all sure, though at times he had felt the only solution of the mystery to be that he liked him because his tendency was toward silence and books and research of all kinds. He thought he was certain that the professor did like him. He had invited him to visit him in Washington, and had taken him to the Smithsonian, and rambled from room to room with him, bestowing upon him tomes of information in the simplest and most natural manner; filled with the quietest interest himself and entirely prepared to find his feeling shared by his charge. He had given into his hands the most treasured volumes in his library, and had even seemed pleased to have him seated near him when he sat at work. At all events, it was an established fact that a friendly

feeling existed between them, and that if it had been his habit to refer to his daughter, he would have spoken of her to Tredennis. But Tredennis heard nothing of her until he had been some days in Washington, and then it was Mrs. Herrick who spoke of her.

"Nathan," she said one evening at dinner, "Bertha will be home on Tuesday."

The professor laid his spoon down as if he had rather unexpectedly discovered that he had had enough soup.

"Bertha," he said. "Indeed! Next Tuesday. Well, of course, we must be ready for her. Do you want any money, my dear? But, of course, you will want money when she comes, if she has finished school, as I think you said she had."

"I shall want money to pay her bills," answered Mrs. Herrick. "She will bring them with her. Her aunt has had her things made in New York."

"Yes," said the professor, "I dare say they will be more satisfactory. What kind of things, for instance, Catherine?"

"Dresses," replied Mrs. Herrick, "and things of that sort. You know she is to come out this season."

"To come out," remarked the professor, carefully giving the matter his undivided attention. "I hope she will enjoy it. What sort of a ceremony is it? And after a young person has 'come out' does she ever go in, and is there any particular pageant attached to such a—a contingency?"

"When she comes out," answered Mrs. Herrick, taking a purely practical view of the affair, "she begins to go to parties, to balls, and receptions, and lunches; which she does not do when she is going to schools. It isn't considered proper, and it wouldn't give her any time for her studies.

Bertha hasn't been allowed to go out at all. Her aunt Maria has been very particular about it, and she will enjoy things all the more because they are quite new to her. I dare say she will be very gay this winter. Washington is a very good place for a girl to come out in."

After dinner, when they retired to the library together, it occurred to Tredennis that the professor was bestowing some thought upon his paternal position, and his first observation proved that this was the case.

"It is a most wonderful thing that a few brief years should make such changes," he said. "It seems impossible that so short a time should change a small and exceedingly red infant into a young person returned from school in the most complete condition, and ready to 'come out.' She was not interesting as an infant. I tried to find her so, but failed, though it was insisted that she was an unusually intelligent baby, and I have not seen much of her of late years. When she was growing it was thought that the climate of Washington was not good for her. I am really a little curious about her. My views of girls are extremely undefined. I have always been a bookworm. I have not known girls. They have not come within my radius. I remember one I once knew years ago, but that is all. It was when I was a younger man. I think she was a year or so older than Bertha. She was very interesting—as a study. She used to bewilder me."

He walked over to the table, and began to turn over some papers.

"She had gray eyes," he said, in a rather lower voice, —"gray eyes."

He was so quiet for some time that Tredennis thought he had forgotten what he had been talking about; but, after a pause of at least three minutes, he spoke again.

"I would not be at all sorry," he said, "if Bertha was a little like her. I suppose," he added,—referring seriously to Tredennis,—"I suppose they are all more or less alike."

"I think"—faltered Tredennis, "perhaps so."

He did not feel himself an authority. The professor stood still a moment, regarding the fire abstractly.

"*She* had gray eyes," he said again,—"gray eyes!" and immediately afterward returned to his table, seated himself, and fell to work.

The next week Bertha arrived, and to her distant relative her arrival was a revelation. She descended upon the quiet household—with her trunks, her delight in their contents, her anticipation of her first season, her fresh and rather surprised exultation in her own small powers and charms, which were just revealing themselves to her—like a young whirlwind. Her mother awakened to a most maternal interest in the gayeties into which she was to be drawn; the very servants were absorbed in the all-pervading excitement, which at length penetrated to the professor's study itself, and aroused him from his entomological reveries.

After she had been in the house a week, he began to examine the girl through his spectacles with great care and deliberation, and, having cheerfully submitted to this inspection through several meals, one day at dinner its object expressed herself with charming directness concerning it.

"I do hope you'll like me, papa," she said, "when you have classified me."

"Classified you!" said the professor, in some bewilderment.

"Yes," answered Bertha. "You know I always feel as if you might turn me over gently with your finger at any moment, and watch me carefully while I struggled until you knew all about me, and then chloroform me and stick a pin through me with a label on it. I shouldn't like the chloroform and the pin, but I should take an interest in the label. Couldn't I have the label without the pin, papa?"

"I don't know," said the professor, examining her more carefully than ever. "I am afraid not."

After that it became his custom to encourage her to reveal herself in conversation, which it was very easy to do, as she was a recklessly candid young person, given to the most delightfully illogical partisanship, an endless variety of romantic fancies, and a vivid representation of all facts in which she felt interest. It must be confessed that, for the sake of hearing her talk, the professor somewhat neglected, for the time being, both *Coleoptera* and *Lepidoptera*, and, drifting into the sitting-room upon many sunny mornings, allowed himself to be surrounded by innocent frivolities in the way of personal adornments. And it must also be added that he fell into the habit of talking of the girl to Tredennis, as they sat together by the study fire at night.

"She is an attractive girl," he said once, seriously. "I find myself quite absorbed in her at times. She is chaotic, illogical, unpractical—oftener than not she does not know anything of what she is talking about, but her very

absurdities have a kind of cleverness in them. And wit—there is wit in her nonsense, though she is scarcely conscious of it. I cannot help thinking of her future, and what its needs will develop in her. It all depends upon the needs. You never know what will be developed, but you know it depends upon the needs."

"I—hope there will be no painful needs," said Tredennis, looking at the fire. "She is very happy. I never saw any one so happy."

"Yes, she's very happy," admitted the professor. "At present she is not much more than a joyous, perfectly healthy young animal. She sings and laughs because she can't help it, and she adorns herself from instinct. She'll be different in a year or two. She'll be less happy, but more interesting."

"More interesting!" said Tredennis, in a low voice.

"Yes, more interesting," answered the professor, looking at the fire himself, with an air of abstractedly following a train of thought. "She will have made discoveries about herself. It is a pity she can't make them without being less happy—but then, none of us are happy." He paused, rubbed his forehead a second, and then turned suddenly on Tredennis.

"Are *you* happy?" he demanded.

Tredennis started and hesitated.

"Y-yes—n-no," he answered, unsteadily. He would have said yes unreservedly a short time ago; but within the last few days he had been less sure of himself, and now, being confronted with the question unexpectedly, he found that he

must answer with a reservation—though he could not at all have given a reason for the feeling that he must do so.

"Perhaps it is not my way to look at life brightly," he added.

"It is her way," said the professor. "She believes in everything in a persistent, childish fashion that is touching to older persons like myself. If you contest her points of belief with her she is simply obstinate. You can't move her."

"Why should any one try?" said Tredennis, warmly.

"There is no need to try," responded the professor. "She will find out for herself."

"Why should she?" said Tredennis, warmer still. "I hope she won't."

The professor took off his spectacles and began to polish them carefully with a corner of his large white handkerchief.

"She is going to be a clever woman," he said. "For her sake I am sorry to see it. She is going to be the kind of clever woman who has nine chances out of ten of being a desperate pain to herself while she is a pleasure to her friends. She hasn't the nature to find safety in cleverness. She has a conscience and emotions, and they will go against her."

"Against her?" cried Tredennis.

"She will make mistakes and suffer for them—instead of letting others suffer. She won't be a saint, but she might be a martyr. It always struck me that it took faults and follies to make a martyr."

He bent forward and poked the fire as carefully as he had rubbed his spectacles; then he turned to Tredennis again—slowly this time, instead of suddenly.

"You resent it all, I suppose," he said. "Of course you do. It makes you angry, I've no doubt. It would have made me angry, I dare say, at your age, to hear an elderly scientist dissect a pretty young creature and take the bloom off her life for her. It's natural."

"I don't like to think of her as—as being anything but happy—and—and good," said Tredennis, with some secret resentment.

"She'll not be bad," said the professor, critically. "It isn't in her. She might be happy, perhaps—if one thing happened to her."

"What one thing?" asked Tredennis.

"*If* she married a fine fellow, whom she was deeply and passionately in love with—which happens to very few women."

In the shadow of his corner Tredennis felt the hot blood mount steadily to his forehead, and was glad of the dim light, for the professor was still regarding him fixedly, though as if in abstraction.

"She will be—likely to marry the man she loves, sir," he said, in a voice neither clear nor steady.

"Yes," said the professor; "unless she makes the mistake of merely marrying the man who loves *her*. She will meet him often enough. And, if he chances some day to be a fascinating fellow, her fate will be sealed. That goes along with the rest of her strengths and weaknesses."

And he gave the fire a vigorous poke, which cast a glow of light upon them both; then, leaving his chair, he stood for a moment polishing his glasses,—staring absently at

Tredennis before he put them on,—and wandered back to his table and his specimens.

Tredennis' own acquaintance with his young relative was not a very intimate one. Too many interests presented themselves on every side to allow of her devoting herself specially to any one, and her father's favorite scarcely took the form of an interest. She had not the leisure to discover that he was fully worth the discovering. She regarded him simply as a large and rather serious young man, who, without seeming stupid, listened rather than talked; and yet was not actually a brilliant listener, since he only listened with an air of observing quietly, and keeping the result of his observations to himself.

"I dare say it will suit him to be out among the Indians," she said to her mother upon one occasion. "And I should think it would suit the Indians. He won't find them frivolous and given up to vanity. I believe he thinks I am frivolous. It struck me that he did the other day, when I was talking about that new dress being made. Do you think I talk about my clothes too much, mamma? Well, at all events," with much frankness, "I don't talk about them half as much as I think about them. I am always thinking about them just now. It seems as if I should die if they weren't becoming after they were made. But don't you suppose it's natural, mamma, and that I shall get over it in time?"

She was brushing out her hair before the glass, and turned round, brush in hand, with an expression of rather alarmed interest, and repeated the question.

"Don't you think I shall get over it?" she said. "It seems just now as if everything had *begun* all at once, and

anything might happen, and I had rather lost my breath a little in the rush of it. And I *do* so want to have a good time, and I care about everything connected with it,—clothes, and people, and parties, and everything,—but I *don't* want to be any more frivolous than I need be,—I mean I don't want to be a stupid."

She gave the pretty red-brown mane embowering her a little shake back, and fixed her large, clear eyes on her mother's.

"I suppose all girls are frivolous just at first," she said. "Don't you?"

"I don't call it frivolous," said her mother, who was a simple, excellent creature, not troubled with intellectual pangs, and who, while she admired her, frequently found her daughter as far beyond her mild, limited comprehension as her husband was, and she was not at all disposed to complain thereat, either.

The one fact she was best able to grasp at this moment was that the girl looked her best, and that the circumstance might be utilized as a hint for the future.

"That way of wearing your hair is very becoming to you, Bertha," she said. "I wish there was some way of managing it so as to get the same effect."

"But I can't wear it down after I'm 'out,'" said Bertha, reflectively. "I've got beyond that—as I suppose I shall get beyond the frivolity."

And she turned to the glass and looked at herself quite simply, and with a soft little air of seriousness which was very bewitching.

She regarded herself in this manner for several seconds, and then began slowly to dress her hair, plaiting it into soft thick plaits, which she fastened closely and simply at the nape of her pretty neck.

"I believe I'll try not to be *quite* so frivolous," she said.

Perhaps she was making an effort at the accomplishment of this desirable end when she came down to dinner, an hour or so later. Tredennis thought he had never seen her so lovely.

He was standing alone in the fire-light, looking doubtfully at something he held in his hand, and she entered so quietly that he started on becoming conscious of her presence. She wore a dress he had not seen before,—a pale gray, soft in material and very simply made, with a little lace kerchief knotted at her throat.

She came forward, and laid her hand on the back of a chair.

"Papa has not come in—?" she began, then stopped suddenly, with a quick, graceful little turn of her head.

"Oh, where is the heliotrope?" she exclaimed.

For the room was full of the subtle fragrance of it.

He made a rather headlong step forward.

"It is here," he said. "I have been out, and I saw a lot of it in a florist's window. I don't know whether it's a flower to wear—and that sort of thing—but I always liked the odor of it. So I brought this home."

And he held it out to her.

She took it and buried her face in it delightedly. It was a sumptuous handful, and had been cut with unsparing lavishness. He had, in fact, stood by and seen it done.

"Ah, I like it so!" she cried. "I do like it—it's lovely."

Then she lifted her face, hesitating a second as a new thought occurred to her. She looked up at him with pretty uncertainty, the color rising in her cheeks simply because she was uncertain.

"They—I don't know"—she said. "You didn't—they are not for"—

"For you," Tredennis ended for her, hurriedly. "Yes. I don't know why, but I thought of you when I saw them. It's an idea, I suppose. They are for you, if you'll have them."

"Ah!" she said, "it was so kind of you! I'm so glad to have them. I have always liked them."

She almost hid her bright face in them again, while he stood and watched her, wondering why he felt suddenly tremulous and unreasonably happy.

At last she looked up at him again.

"I wish this was my 'coming-out' night," she said. "I would wear these. You have given me my first bouquet. I am glad of that."

"If I am here on the night of your first party," he answered, "I will give you another, if you will let me."

"If you are here?" she said "Are you going away?"

And there was an innocent, unconsciously expressed touch of disappointment in her tone, which was a sharp pleasure to him, though he was in too chaotic a mental condition to call it either pleasure or pain.

"I may be ordered away at any moment," he said.

He could never exactly remember afterward how it came about, that in a few moments more he was sitting in the professor's arm-chair, and she had taken a seat on a

hassock near him, with some of his heliotrope in the knot of her hair, some fastened against her pale gray dress, and some loosely clasped in the hand which rested on her lap. He did not know how it happened, but she was there, and the scent of the heliotrope floated about her in the warmth of the fire, and she was talking in the bright, fanciful way which entertained the professor, and he knew that this brief moment he came for the first time within the charmed circle of her girlish life and pleasures, and, though he was conscious that his nearness moved her no more than the professor's would have done, he was content.

There was a softness in her manner which was new to him, and which had the effect of giving him courage. It was a result partly of the pleasure he had given her and partly of the good resolution she had made, of which he knew nothing. He only saw the result, and enjoyed it. She even showed a pretty interest in his future.

"She is what the Italians call *simpatica*," had been one of her father's observations concerning her, and Tredennis thought of it as he listened and watched her.

It was her gift to say well all she had to say. Her simplest speech produced its little effect, because all her heart was with her hearer. Just now she thought only of Tredennis, and that she wished to show her interest in him.

So she sat with her flowers upon her knee and talked, and it was an enchanted hour for Tredennis, who felt like a creature slowly awakening to the light of day.

"I suppose we may not see you again for several years," she said. "I do not like to think of that, and I am sure papa won't, but"—and she turned, smiling into his eyes, her chin

resting in the hollow of her palm, her elbow on her knee —"when we *do* see you, of course you will be a most distinguished person, entirely covered with stars and ribbons and—scalps!"

"And you," he said; "I wonder what will have happened to you?"

"Oh, a great many things, of course," she answered; "but only the unimportant things that happen to all girls—though they will be important enough to me. I dare say I shall have had a lovely time, and have been very happy."

And she turned her little smile upon the fire and brooded for a few seconds—still in her pretty attitude.

It was such a pretty attitude and her look was so sweet that both together wrought upon Tredennis strongly, and he felt himself awakening a little more.

"I wish," he said, breaking the brief silence in a low voice, —"I wish that *I* could insure the—happiness for you."

She turned, with a slight start, and some vague trouble in her face.

"Oh!" she said, "don't you think I shall be sure to be happy? There seems to be no reason why I should not. Oh, I hope I shall be happy; I—I don't know what I should do if I wasn't happy! I can't imagine it."

"Everybody is not happy," he said, his voice almost tremulous.

"But," she faltered, "but I—I have always been happy"— She stopped, her eyes appealing to him piteously. "I suppose, after all, that is a poor reason," she added; "but it almost seems like one."

"I wish it were one!" he said. "Don't look like that. It—it hurts me. If any sacrifice of mine—any suffering"—

She stirred a little, moved in some vague way by the intensity of his tone, and as she did so the odor of the heliotrope floated toward him.

"Bertha!"—he said, "Bertha"—

He did not know what he would have said—and the words were never spoken—for at that moment the enchanted hour was ended. It was the professor himself who broke in upon it—the professor who opened the door and entered, hungry and absent-minded, the fire-light striking upon his spectacles and seeming to enlarge them tremendously as he turned his head from side to side, inhaling the air of the room with evident delight.

"Flowers, eh?" he said. "What kind of flowers? The air seems full of them."

Bertha rose and went to him, Tredennis watching her girlish pale-gray figure, as it moved across the room, with a pained and bewildered sense of having lost something which he might never regain.

"They are heliotropes," she said; "Philip brought them to me. It is my first bouquet, so I shall keep it until I am an old woman."

A week later, Tredennis left Washington. It so chanced that he took his departure on the night rendered eventful by the first party. In the excitement attendant upon the preparations for this festivity, and for his own journey, he saw even less of Bertha than usual. When she appeared at the table she was in such bright, high spirits that the professor found her—for some private reason of his own—

more absorbing than ever. His spectacles followed her with an air of deep interest, he professed an untrained anxiety concerning the dress she was to wear, appearing to regard it as a scientific object worthy of attention.

"She's very happy!" he would say to Tredennis again and again. "She's very happy!" And having said it he invariably rubbed his forehead abstractedly and pushed his spectacles a trifle awry, without appearing conscious of it.

When the carriage Tredennis had ordered came to the door, at ten o'clock, the coupé which was to convey Bertha to the scene of her first triumphs had just driven up.

A few seconds later Bertha turned from her mirror and took up her bouquet of white rose-buds and heliotrope, as a servant knocked at the door.

"The carriage is here, miss," he said; "and Mr. Tredennis is going away, and says would you come and let him say good-by."

In a few seconds more, Tredennis, who was standing in the hall, looked up from the carpet and saw her coming down the staircase with a little run, her white dress a cloud about her, her eyes shining like stars, the rose and heliotrope bouquet he had sent her in her hand.

"Thank you for it," she said, as soon as she reached him. "I shall keep this, too; and see what I have done." And she pushed a leaf aside and showed him a faded sprig of heliotrope hidden among the fresh flowers. "I thought I would like to have a little piece of it among the rest," she said. And she gave him her hand, with a smile both soft and bright.

"And you really kept it?" he said.

"Oh, yes," she answered, simply. "You know I am going to keep it as long as I live. I wish we could keep you. I wish you were going with us."

"I am going in a different direction," he said; "and"—suddenly, "I have not a minute to spare. Good-by."

A little shadow fell on the brightness of her face.

"I wish there was no such word as 'good-by,'" she said.

There was a silence of a few seconds, in which her hand lay in his, and their eyes rested on each other. Then Mrs. Herrick and the professor appeared.

"I believe," said Tredennis, "if you are going now, I will let you set out on your journey first. I should like to see—the last of you."

"But it isn't the last of me," said Bertha, "it is the first of me—the very first. And my heart is beating quite fast."

And she put her hand to the side of her slender white bodice, laughing a gay, sweet laugh, with a thrill of excitement in it. And then they went out to the carriage, and when Mrs. Herrick had been assisted in, Bertha stood for a moment on the pavement,—a bright, pure white figure, her flowers in her hand, the hall light shining upon her.

"Papa!" she called to the professor, who stood on the threshold, "I never asked you if you liked it—the dress, you know."

"Yes, child," said the professor. "Yes, child, I like—I like it."

And his voice shook a little, and he said nothing more. And then Bertha got into the carriage and it drove away into the darkness. And almost immediately after Tredennis found himself in his carriage, which drove away into the darkness, too—only, as he laid his head against the cushions and

closed his eyes, he saw, just as he had seen a moment before, a bright, pure white figure standing upon the pavement, the night behind it, the great bouquet of white roses in its hand, and the light from the house streaming upon the radiant girl's face.

CHAPTER II.

Table of Contents

The eight years that followed were full of events for Tredennis. After the first two his name began to be well known in military circles as that of a man bold, cool, and remarkable for a just clear-sightedness which set him somewhat apart from most men of his class and age. Stationed as he was in the midst of a hostile Indian country, full of perilous adventure, a twofold career opened itself before him. His nerve, courage, and physical endurance rendered him invaluable in time of danger, while his tendency to constant study of the problems surrounding him gave him in time of peace the distinction of being a thinking man, whose logically deduced and clearly stated opinions were continually of use to those whose positions were more responsible than his own. He never fell into the ordinary idle routine of a frontier camp life. In his plain, soldierly quarters he worked hard, lived simply, and read much. During the first year he was rather desolate and unhappy. The weeks he had spent with the Herricks had been by no means the best preparation for his frontier experience, since they had revealed to him the possibilities of existence such as he had given no thought to before. His youth had been rather rigorous and lonely, and his misfortune of reserve had prevented his forming any intimate friendships. His boyhood had been spent at boarding-school, his early manhood at West Point, and after that his life had settled itself into the usual wandering, homeless groove which must be the lot of an unmarried military man. The warm atmosphere of a long-

established home, its agreeably unobtrusive routine which made the changes of morning, noon, and night all something pleasant to anticipate; the presence of the women who could not be separated in one's mind from the household itself,—all these things were a sort of revelation to him. He had enjoyed them, and would have felt some slight sadness in leaving them, even if he had not left something else also. It was a mere shadow he had left, but it was a shadow whose memory haunted him through many a long and lonely hour, and was all the more a trouble through its very vagueness. He was not the man likely to become the victim of a hopeless passion in three weeks. His was a nature to awaken slowly, but to awaken to such strength of feeling and to such power to suffer, at last, as would leave no alternative between happiness and stolidly borne despair. If fate decreed that the despair and not the happiness was to be his portion, it would be borne silently and with stern patience, but it would be despair nevertheless. As it was, he had been gradually aroused to a vague tenderness of feeling for the brightness and sweetness which had been before him day after day. Sometimes, during this first year of his loneliness, he wondered why he had not gone farther and reached the point of giving some expression to what he had felt; but he never did so without being convinced by his after reflections that such an effort would only have told against him.

"It wasn't the time," he said aloud to himself, as he sat in his lonely room one night. "It wasn't the time."

He had been thinking of how she looked as she came to him that night, in her simple pale-gray dress, with the little

lace kerchief tied round her throat. That, and his memory of the bright figure at the carriage-door, were pictures which had a habit of starting up before him now and again, though chiefly at such times as he was alone and rather feeling his isolation.

He remembered his own feeling at her girlish pleasure in his gift, the tone of her voice, her attitude as she sat afterward on the low seat near him, her chin resting in her hollowed palm, her smiling eyes uplifted to his. Her pretty, unstudied attitudes had often struck him, and this one lingered in his fancy as somehow belonging naturally to a man's dreams of a fireside.

"If the room and fireside were your own," he said, abstractedly, "you'd like"—

He stopped, and, rising to his feet, suddenly began to pace the room.

"But it wasn't the time," he said. "She would not have understood—I scarcely understood myself—and if we should ever meet again, in all probability the time will have gone by."

After such thoughts he always betook himself to his books again with quite a fierce vigor, and in the rebound accomplished a great deal.

He gave a great deal of studious attention to the Indian question, and, in his determination to achieve practical knowledge, undertook more than one dangerous adventure. With those among the tribes whom it was possible to approach openly he made friends, studying their languages and establishing a reputation among them for honor and

good faith, which was a useful element in matters of negotiation and treaty.

So it came about that his name was frequently mentioned in "the Department," and drifted into the newspapers, his opinions being quoted as opinions carrying weight, and, in an indirect way, the Herricks heard of him oftener than he heard of them, since there had been no regular exchange of letters between them, the professor being the poorest of correspondents. Occasionally, when he fell upon a newspaper paragraph commenting upon Tredennis' work and explaining some of his theories, he was roused to writing him a letter of approval or argument, and at the close of such epistles he usually mentioned his daughter in a fashion peculiarly his own.

"Bertha is happier than ever," he said, the first winter. "Bertha is well, and is said to dance, in the most astonishingly attractive manner, an astonishing number of times every evening. This I gather not only from her mother, but from certain elaborately ornamented cards they call programmes, which I sometimes find and study in private,"—this came the second winter. The third he said: "It dawns upon Bertha that she is certainly cleverer than the majority of her acquaintance. This at once charms and surprises her. She is careful not to obtrude the fact upon public notice, but it has been observed; and I find she has quite a little reputation 'in society' as an unusually bright and ready young creature, with a habit of being delightfully equal to any occasion. I gradually discover her to be full of subtleties, of which she is entirely unconscious."

Tredennis read this a number of times, and found food for reflection in it. He thought it over frequently during the winter, and out of his pondering upon it grew a plan which began to unfold itself in his mind, rather vaguely at first, but afterward more definitely. This plan was his intention to obtain leave of absence, and, having obtained it, to make his way at once to Washington.

He had thought at first of applying for it in the spring, but fate was against him. Difficulties which broke out between the settlers and certain hostile tribes called him into active service, and it was not until the severities of the next winter aided in quelling the disturbance by driving the Indians into shelter that he found himself free again.

It was late on New Year's Eve that he went to his quarters to write his application for furlough. He had been hard at work all day, and came in cold and tired, and pleased to find the room made cheerful by a great fire of logs, whose leaping flames brightened and warmed every corner. The mail had come in during his absence, and two or three letters lay upon the table with the eastern papers, but he pushed them aside without opening them.

"I will look at them afterward," he said. "This shall be done first—before the clock strikes twelve. When the New Year comes in"—

He paused, pen in hand, accidentally catching a glimpse of his face in the by no means flattering shaving-glass which hung on the wall opposite. He saw himself brown with exposure, bearing marks of thought and responsibility his age did not warrant, and wearing even at this moment the rather stern and rigid expression which he had always felt

vaguely to be his misfortune. Recognizing it, his face relaxed into a half-smile.

"What a severe-looking fellow!" he said. "*That* must be improved upon. No one could stand that. It is against a man at the outset."

And the smile remained upon his face for at least ten seconds—at all events until he had drawn his paper before him and begun to write. His task was soon completed. The letter written, he folded it, placed it in its envelope and directed it, looking as immovable as ever, and yet conscious of being inwardly more moved than he had ever been before.

"Perhaps," he said, half-aloud, "*this* is the time, and it is well I waited."

And then he turned to the letters and papers awaiting him.

The papers he merely glanced over and laid aside; the letters he opened and read. There were four of them, three of them business epistles, soon disposed of; the sight of the handwriting upon the fourth made his heart bound suddenly,—it was the clear, space-saving calligraphy of Professor Herrick, who labelled his envelopes as economically as if they had been entomological specimens.

"It's curious that it should have come now," Tredennis said, as he tore it open.

It was a characteristic letter, written, it appeared, with the object of convincing Tredennis that he had been guilty of a slight error in one of his statements concerning the sign-language of a certain tribe. It devoted five pages of closely-written paper to proofs and researches into the subject, and

scientific reasons for the truth of all assertions made. It was clear, and by no means uninteresting. The professor never was uninteresting, and he was generally correct. Tredennis read his arguments carefully and with respect, even with an occasional thrill, as he remembered how his communications usually terminated.

But this was an exception to the general rule. At the bottom of the fifth page he signed himself, "Your sincere friend, Nathan Herrick." And he had said nothing about Bertha.

"Not a word," said Tredennis. "He never did so before. What does it mean? Not a word!"

And he had scarcely finished speaking before he saw that on the back of the last page a postscript was written,—a brief one, three words, without comment, these: "Bertha is married."

For a few moments Tredennis sat still and stared at them. The glass across the room reflected very little change in his face. The immovable look became a trifle more immovable, if anything. There was scarcely the stirring of a muscle.

At length he moved slowly, folding the letter carefully and returning it to its envelope in exactly the folds it had lain in when he took it out. After that he rose and began to pace the floor with a slow and heavy tread. Once he stopped and spoke, looking down at the boards beneath his feet.

"Bertha is married," he said, in a low, hard voice. And the clock beginning to strike at the moment, he listened until it ended its stroke of twelve, and then spoke again.

"The New Year," he said; "and Bertha is married."