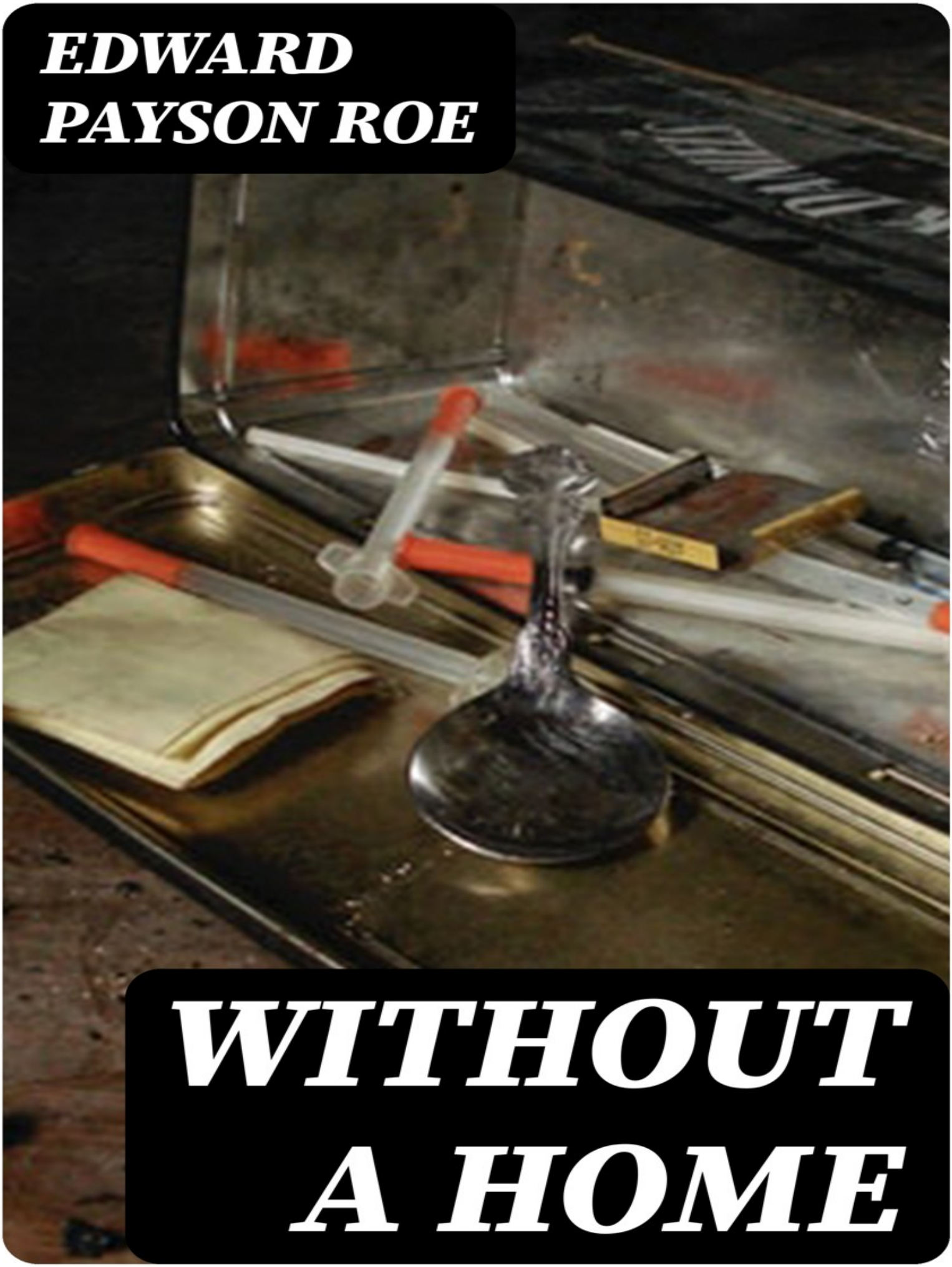
EDWARD
PAYSON ROE
WITHOUT
A HOME

Edward Payson Roe

Without a Home

EAN 8596547371199

DigiCat, 2022
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ILLUSTRATED

PREFACE

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Just ten years ago I took my first hesitating and dubious steps toward authorship. My reception on the part of the public has been so much kinder than I expected, and the audience that has listened to my stories with each successive autumn has been so steadfast and loyal, that I can scarcely be blamed for entertaining a warm and growing regard for these unseen, unknown friends. Toward indifferent strangers we maintain a natural reticence, but as acquaintance ripens into friendship there is a mutual impulse toward an exchange of confidences. In the many kind letters received I have gratefully recognized this impulse in my readers, and am tempted by their interest to be a little garrulous concerning my literary life, the causes which led to it, and the methods of my work. Those who are indifferent can easily skip these preliminary pages, and those who are learning to care a little for the personality of him who has come to them so often with the kindling of the

autumn fires may find some satisfaction in learning why he comes, and the motive, the spirit with which, in a sense, he ventures to be present at their hearths.

One of the advantages of authorship is criticism; and I have never had reason to complain of its absence. My only regret is that I have not been able to make better use of it. I admit that both the praise and blame have been rather bewildering, but this confusion is undoubtedly due to a lack of the critical faculty. With one acute gentleman, however, who remarked that it "was difficult to account for the popularity of Mr. Roe's books," I am in hearty accord. I fully share in his surprise and perplexity. It may be that we at last have an instance of an effect without a cause.

Ten years ago I had never written a line of a story, and had scarcely entertained the thought of constructing one. The burning of Chicago impressed me powerfully, and obedient to an impulse I spent several days among its smoking ruins. As a result, my first novel, "Barriers Burned Away," gradually took possession of my mind. I did not manufacture the story at all, for it grew as naturally as do the plants—weeds, some may suggest—on my farm. In the intervals of a busy and practical life, and also when I ought to have been sleeping, my imagination, unspurred, and almost undirected, spun the warp and woof of the tale, and wove them together. At first I supposed it would be but a brief story, which might speedily find its way into my own waste-basket, and I was on the point of burning it more than once. One wintry afternoon I read the few chapters then written to a friend in whose literary taste I had much confidence, and had her verdict been adverse they probably

would have perished as surely as a callow germ exposed to the bitter storm then raging without. I am not sure, however, but that the impulse to write would have carried me forward, and that I would have found ample return for all the labor in the free play of my fancy, even though editors and publishers scoffed at the result.

On a subsequent winter afternoon the incipient story passed through another peril. In the office of "The New York Evangelist" I read the first eight chapters of my blotted manuscript to Dr. Field and his associate editor, Mr. J. H. Dey. This fragment was all that then existed, and as I stumbled through my rather blind chirography I often looked askance at the glowing grate, fearing lest my friends in kindness would suggest that I should drop the crude production on the coals, where it could do neither me nor any one else further harm, and then go out into the world once more clothed in my right mind. A heavy responsibility rests on the gentlemen named, for they asked me to leave the manuscript for serial issue. From that hour I suppose I should date the beginning of my life of authorship. The story grew from eight into fifty-two chapters, and ran just one year in the paper, my manuscript often being ready but a few pages in advance of publication. I wrote no outline for my guidance; I merely let the characters do as they pleased, and work out their own destiny. I had no preparation for my work beyond a careful study of the topography of Chicago and the incidents of the fire. For nearly a year my chief recreation was to dwell apart among the shadows created by my fancy, and I wrote when and where I could—on steamboats and railroad cars, as well as in my study. In

spite of my fears the serial found readers, and at last I obtained a publisher. When the book appeared I suppose I looked upon it much as a young father looks upon his first child. His interest in it is intense, but he knows well that its future is very doubtful.

It appears to me, however, that the true impulse toward authorship does not arise from a desire to please any one, but rather from a strong consciousness of something definite to say, whether people will listen or not. I can honestly assert that I have never manufactured a novel, and should I do so I am sure it would be so wooden and lifeless that no one would read it. My stories have come with scarcely any volition on my part, and their characters control me. If I should move them about like images they would be but images. In every book they often acted in a manner just the opposite from that which I had planned. Moreover, there are unwritten stories in my mind, the characters of which are becoming almost as real as the people I meet daily. While composing narratives I forget everything and live in an ideal world, which nevertheless is real for the time. The fortunes of the characters affect me deeply, and I truly believe that only as I feel strongly will the reader be interested. A book, like a bullet, can go only as far as the projecting force carries it.

The final tests of all literary and art work are an intelligent public and time. We may hope, dream, and claim what we please, but these two tribunals will settle all values; therefore the only thing for an author or artist to do is to express his own individuality clearly and honestly, and

submit patiently and deferentially to these tests. In nature the lichen has its place as truly as the oak.

I will say but a few words in regard to the story contained in this volume. It was announced two years ago, but I found that I could not complete it satisfactorily. In its present form it has been almost wholly recast, and much broadened in its scope. It touches upon several modern and very difficult problems. I have not in the remotest degree attempted to solve them, but rather have sought to direct attention to them. In our society public opinion is exceedingly powerful. It is the torrent that sweeps away obstructing evils. The cleansing tide is composed originally of many rills and streamlets, and it is my hope that this volume may add a little to that which at last is irresistible.

I can say with sincerity that I have made my studies carefully and patiently, and when dealing with practical phases of city life I have evolved very little from my own inner consciousness. I have visited scores of typical tenements; I have sat day after day on the bench with the police judges, and have visited the station-houses repeatedly. There are few large retail shops that I have not entered many times, and I have conversed with both the employers and employes. It is a shameful fact that, in the face of a plain statute forbidding the barbarous regulation, saleswomen are still compelled to stand continuously in many of the stores. On the intensely hot day when our murdered President was brought from Washington to the sea-side, I found many girls standing wearily and uselessly because of this inhuman rule. There was no provision for their occasional rest. Not for a thousand dollars would I have

incurred the risk and torture of standing through that sultry day. There are plenty of shops in the city which are now managed on the principles of humanity, and such patronage should be given to these and withdrawn from the others as would teach the proprietors that women are entitled to a little of the consideration that is so justly associated with the work of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Mr. Bergh deserves praise for protecting even a cat from cruelty; but all the cats in the city unitedly could not suffer as much as the slight growing girl who must stand during a long hot day. I trust the reader will note carefully the Appendix at the close of this book.

It will soon be discovered that the modern opium or morphia habit has a large place in this volume. While I have tried to avoid the style of a medical treatise, which would be in poor taste in a work of fiction, I have carefully consulted the best medical works and authorities on the subject, and I have conversed with many opium slaves in all stages of the habit. I am sure I am right in fearing that in the morphia hunger and consumption one of the greatest evils of the future is looming darkly above the horizon of society. Warnings against this poison of body and soul cannot be too solemn or too strong.

So many have aided me in the collection of my material that any mention of names may appear almost invidious; but as the reader will naturally think that the varied phases of the opium habit are remote from my experience, I will say that I have been guided in my words by trustworthy physicians like Drs. E. P. Fowler, of New York; Louis Seaman, chief of staff at the Charity Hospital; Wm. H. Vail, and many

others. I have also read such parts of my MS. as touched on this subject to Dr. H. K. Kane, the author of two works on the morphia habit.

This novel appeared as a serial in the "Congregationalist" of Boston, and my acknowledgments are due to the editors and publishers of this journal for their confidence in taking the story before it was written and for their uniform courtesy.

I can truly say that I have bestowed more labor on this book than upon any which have preceded it; for the favor accorded me by the public imposes the strongest obligation to be conscientious in my work.

XLIX. HOME

APPENDIX

WITHOUT A HOME

CHAPTER I

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ONE GIRL'S IDEAL OF LIFE

It was an attractive picture that Martin Jocelyn looked upon through the open doorway of his parlor. His lively daughter Belle had invited half a score of her schoolmates to spend the evening, and a few privileged brothers had been permitted to come also. The young people were naturally selecting those dances which had some of the characteristics of a romp, for they were at an age when motion means enjoyment.

Miss Belle, eager and mettlesome, stood waiting for music that could scarcely be lighter or more devoid of moral quality than her own immature heart. Life, at that time, had for her but one great desideratum—fun; and with her especial favorites about her, with a careful selection of "nice brothers," canvassed with many pros and cons over neglected French exercises, she had the promise of plenty of it for a long evening, and her dark eyes glowed and cheeks flamed at the prospect. Impatiently tapping the floor with her foot, she looked toward her sister, who was seated at the piano.

Mildred Jocelyn knew that all were waiting for her; she instinctively felt the impatience she did not see, and yet

could not resist listening to some honeyed nonsense that her "friend" was saying. Ostensibly, Vinton Arnold was at her side to turn the leaves of the music, but in reality to feast his eyes on beauty which daily bound him in stronger chains of fascination. Her head drooped under his words, but only as the flowers bend under the dew and rain that give them life. His passing compliment was a trifle, but it seemed like the delicate touch to which the subtle electric current responds. From a credulous, joyous heart a crimson tide welled up into her face and neck; she could not repress a smile, though she bowed her head in girlish shame to hide it. Then, as if the light, gay music before her had become the natural expression of her mood, she struck into it with a brilliancy and life that gave even Belle content.

Arnold saw the pleasure his remark had given, and surmised the reason why the effect was so much greater than the apparent cause. For a moment an answering glow lighted up his pale face, and then, as if remembering something, he sighed deeply; but in the merry life which now filled the apartments a sigh stood little chance of recognition.

The sigh of the master of the house, however, was so deep and his face so clouded with care and anxiety as he turned from it all, that his wife, who at that moment met him, was compelled to note that something was amiss.

"Martin, what is it?" she asked.

He looked for a moment into her troubled blue eyes, and noted how fair, delicate, and girlish she still appeared in her evening dress. He knew also that the delicacy and refinement of feature were but the reflex of her nature, and,

for the first time in his life, he wished that she were a strong, coarse woman.

"No matter, Fanny, to-night. See that the youngsters have a good time," and he passed hastily out.

"He's worrying about those stupid business matters again," she said, and the thought seemed to give much relief.

Business matters were masculine, and she was essentially feminine. Her world was as far removed from finance as her laces from the iron in which her husband dealt.

A little boy of four years of age and a little girl of six, whose tiny form was draped in such gossamer-like fabrics that she seemed more fairy-like than human, were pulling at her dress, eager to enter the mirth-resounding parlors, but afraid to leave her sheltering wing. Mrs. Jocelyn watched the scene from the doorway, where her husband had stood, without his sigh. Her motherly heart sympathized with Belle's abounding life and fun, and her maternal pride was assured by the budding promise of a beauty which would shine pre-eminent when the school-girl should become a belle in very truth.

But her eyes rested on Mildred with wistful tenderness. Her own experience enabled her to interpret her daughter's manner, and to understand the ebb and flow of feeling whose cause, as yet, was scarcely recognized by the young girl.

The geniality of Mrs. Jocelyn's smile might well assure Vinton Arnold that she welcomed his presence at her daughter's side, and yet, for some reason, the frank, cordial

greeting in the lady's eyes and manner made him sigh again. He evidently harbored a memory or a thought that did not accord with the scene or the occasion. Whatever it was it did not prevent him from enjoying to the utmost the pleasure he ever found in the presence of Mildred. In contrast with Belle she had her mother's fairness and delicacy of feature, and her blue eyes were not designed to express the exultation and pride of one of society's flattered favorites. Indeed it was already evident that a glance from Arnold was worth more than the world's homage. And yet it was comically pathetic—as it ever is—to see how the girl tried to hide the "abundance of her heart."

"Millie is myself right over again," thought Mrs. Jocelyn; "hardly in society before in a fair way to be out of it. Beaux in general have few attractions for her. Belle, however, will lead the young men a chase. If I'm any judge, Mr. Arnold's symptoms are becoming serious. He's just the one of all the world for Millie, and could give her the home which her style of beauty requires—a home in which not a common or coarse thing would be visible, but all as dainty as herself. How I would like to furnish her house! But Martin always thinks he's so poor."

Mrs. Jocelyn soon left the parlor to complete her arrangements for an elegant little supper, and she complacently felt that, whatever might be the tribulations of the great iron firm down town, her small domain was serene with present happiness and bright with promise.

While the vigorous appetites of the growing boys and girls were disposing of the supper, Arnold and Mildred rather neglected their plates, finding ambrosia in each other's

eyes, words, and even intonations. Now that they had the deserted parlor to themselves, Mildred seemed under less constraint.

"It was very nice of you," she said, "to come and help me entertain
Belle's friends, especially when they are all so young."

"Yes," he replied. "I am a happy monument of self-sacrifice."

"But not a brazen one," she added quickly.

"No, nor a bronze one, either," he said, and a sudden gloom gathered in his large dark eyes.

She had always admired the pallor of his face. "It set off his superb brown eyes and heavy mustache so finely," she was accustomed to say. But this evening for some reason she wished that there was a little more bronze on his cheek and decision in his manner. His aristocratic pallor was a trifle too great, and he seemed a little frail to satisfy even her ideal of manhood.

She said, in gentle solicitude, "You do not look well this spring.
I fear you are not very strong."

He glanced at her quickly, but in her kindly blue eyes and in every line of her lovely face he saw only friendly regard—perhaps more, for her features were not designed for disguises. After a moment he replied, with a quiet bitterness which both pained and mystified her:

"You are right. I am not strong."

"But summer is near," she resumed earnestly. "You will soon go to the country, and will bring back this fall bronze in plenty, and the strength of bronze. Mother says we shall go

to Saratoga. That is one of your favorite haunts, I believe, so I shall have the pleasure, perhaps, of drinking 'your very good health' some bright morning before breakfast. Which is your favorite spring?"

"I do not know. I will decide after I have learned your choice."

"That's an amiable weakness. I think I shall like Saratoga. The great hotels contain all one wishes for amusement. Then everything about town is so nice, pretty, and sociable. The shops, also, are fine. Too often we have spent our summers in places that were a trifle dreary. Mountains oppress me with a sense of littleness, and their wildness frightens me. The ocean is worse still. The moment I am alone with it, such a lonely, desolate feeling creeps over me—oh, I can't tell you! I fear you think I am silly and frivolous. You think I ought to be inspired by the shaggy mountains and wild waves and all that. Well, you may think so—I won't tell fibs. I don't think mother is frivolous, and she feels as I do. We are from the South, and like things that are warm, bright, and sociable. The ocean always seemed to me so large and cold and pitiless—to care so little for those in its power."

"In that respect it's like the world, or rather the people in it—"

"Oh, no, no!" she interrupted eagerly; "it is to the world of people I am glad to escape from these solitudes of nature. As I said, the latter, with their vastness, power, and, worse than all, their indifference, oppress me, and make me shiver with a vague dread. I once saw a ship beaten to pieces by the waves in a storm. It was on the coast near

where we were spending the summer. Some of the people on the vessel were drowned, and their cries ring in my ears to this day. Oh, it was piteous to see them reaching out their hands, but the great merciless waves would not stop a moment, even when a little time would have given the lifeboats a chance to save the poor creatures. The breakers just struck and pounded the ship until it broke into pieces, and then tossed the lifeless body and broken wood on the shore as if one were of no more value than the other. I can't think of it without shuddering, and I've hated the sea ever since, and never wish to go near it again."

"You have unconsciously described this Christian city," said Arnold, with a short laugh.

"What a cynic you are to-night! You condemn all the world, and find fault even with yourself—a rare thing in cynics, I imagine. As a rule they are right, and the universe wrong."

"I have not found any fault with you," he said, in a tone that caused her long eyelashes to veil the pleasure she could not wholly conceal.

"I hope the self-constraint imposed by your courtesy is not too severe for comfort. I also understand the little fiction of excepting present company. But I cannot help remembering that I am a wee bit of the world and very worldly; that is, I am very fond of the world and all its pretty follies. I like nice people much better than savage mountains and heartless waves."

"And yet you are not what I should call a society girl, Miss Millie."

"I'm glad you think so. I've no wish to win that character. Fashionable society seems to me like the sea, as restless and unreasoning, always on the go, and yet never going anywhere. I know lots of girls who go here and there and do this and that with the monotony with which the waves roll in and out. Half the time they act contrary to their wishes and feelings, but they imagine it the thing to do, and they do it till they are tired and bored half to death."

"What, then, is your ideal of life?"

Her head drooped a little lower, and the tell-tale color would come as she replied hesitatingly, and with a slight deprecatory laugh:

"Well, I can't say I've thought it out very definitely. Plenty of real friends seem to me better than the world's stare, even though there's a trace of admiration in it Then, again, you men so monopolize the world that there is not much left for us poor women to do; but I have imagined that to create a lovely home, and to gather in it all the beauty within one's reach, and just the people one best liked, would be a very congenial life-work for some women. That is what mother is doing for us, and she seems very happy and contented—much more so than those ladies who seek their pleasures beyond their homes. You see I use my eyes, Mr. Arnold, even if I am not antiquated enough to be wise."

His look had grown so wistful and intent that she could not meet it, but averted her face as she spoke. Suddenly he sprang up, and took her hand with a pressure all too strong for the "friend" she called him, as he said:

"Miss Millie, you are one of a thousand. Good-night."

For a few moments she sat where he left her. What did he mean? Had she revealed her heart too plainly? His manner surely had been unmistakable, and no woman could have doubted the language of his eyes.

"But some constraint," she sighed, "ties his tongue."

The more she thought it over, however—and what young girl does not live over such interviews a hundred times—the more convinced she became that her favorite among the many who sought her favor gave as much to her as she to him; and she was shrewd enough to understand that the nearer two people exchange evenly in these matters the better it is for both. Her last thought that night was, "To make a home for him would be happiness indeed. How much life promises me!"

CHAPTER II

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WEAKNESS

Vinton Arnold's walk down Fifth Avenue was so rapid as to indicate strong perturbation. At last he entered a large house of square, heavy architecture, a creation evidently of solid wealth in the earlier days of the thoroughfare's history. There was something in his step as he crossed the marble hall to the hat-rack and then went up the stairway that caused his mother to pass quickly from her sitting-room that she might intercept him. After a moment's scrutiny she said, in a low, hard tone:

"You have spent the evening with Miss Jocelyn again."

He made no reply.

"Are you a man of honor?"

His pallid face crimsoned instantly, and his hands clenched with repressed feeling, but he still remained silent. Neither did he appear to have the power to meet his mother's cold, penetrating glance.

"It would seem," she resumed, in the same quiet, incisive tone, "that my former suggestions have been unheeded. I fear that I must speak more plainly. You will please come with me for a few moments."

With evident reluctance he followed her to a small apartment, furnished richly, but with the taste and elegance of a past generation. He had become very pale again, but his face wore the impress of pain and irresolution rather than of sullen defiance or of manly independence. The hardness of the gold that had been accumulating in the family for generations had seemingly permeated the mother's heart, for the expression of her son's face softened neither her tone nor manner. And yet not for a moment could she be made to think of herself as cruel, or even stern. She was simply firm and sensible in the performance of her duty. She was but maintaining the traditional policy of the family, and was conscious that society would thoroughly approve of her course. Chief of all, she sincerely believed that she was promoting her son's welfare, but she had not Mrs. Jocelyn's gentle ways of manifesting solicitude.

After a moment of oppressive silence, she began:

"Perhaps I can best present this issue in its true light by again asking, Are you a man of honor?"

"Is it dishonorable," answered her son irritably, "to love a pure, good girl?"

"No," said his mother, in the same quiet, measured voice; "but it may be very great folly and a useless waste. It is dishonorable, however, to inspire false hopes in a girl's heart, no matter who she is. It is weak and dishonorable to hover around a pretty face like a poor moth that singes its wings."

In sudden, passionate appeal, he exclaimed, "If I can win Miss
Jocelyn, why cannot I marry her? She is as good as she is

beautiful.
If you knew her as I do you would be proud to call her your daughter.
They live very prettily, even elegantly—"

By a simple, deprecatory gesture Mrs. Arnold made her son feel that it was useless to add another word.

"Vinton," she said, "a little reason in these matters is better than an indefinite amount of sentimental nonsense. You are now old enough to be swayed by reason, and not to fume and fret after the impossible like a child. Neither your father nor I have acted hastily in this matter. It was a great trial to discover that you had allowed your fancy to become entangled below the circle in which it is your privilege to move, and I am thankful that my other children have been more considerate. In a quiet, unobtrusive way we have taken pains to learn all about the Jocelyns. They are comparative strangers in the city. Mr. Jocelyn is merely a junior partner in a large iron firm, and from all your father says I fear he has lived too elegantly for his means. That matter will soon be tested, however, for his firm is in trouble and will probably have to suspend. With your health, and in the face of the fierce competition in this city, are you able to marry and support a penniless girl? If, on the contrary, you propose to support a wife on the property that now belongs to your father and myself, our wishes should have some weight. I tell you frankly that our means, though large, are not sufficient to make you all independent and maintain the style to which you have been accustomed. With your frail health and need of exemption from care and toil, you must marry wealth. Your father is well satisfied that whoever

allies himself to this Jocelyn family may soon have them all on his hands to support. We decline the risk of burdening ourselves with these unknown, uncongenial people. Is there anything unreasonable in that? Because you are fascinated by a pretty face, of which there are thousands in this city, must we be forced into intimate associations with people that are wholly distasteful to us? This would be a poor return for having shielded you so carefully through years of ill health and feebleness."

The young man's head drooped lower and lower as his mother spoke, and his whole air was one of utter despondency. She waited for his reply, but for a few moments he did not speak. Suddenly he looked up, with a reckless, characteristic laugh, and said:

"The Spartans were right in destroying the feeble children. Since I am under such obligations, I cannot resist your logic, and I admit that it would be poor taste on my part to ask you to support for me a wife not of your choosing."

"'Good taste' at least should have prevented such a remark. You can choose for yourself from a score of fine girls of your own station in rank and wealth."

"Pardon me, but I would rather not inflict my weakness on any of the score."

"But you would inflict it on one weak in social position and without any means of support."

"She is the one girl that I have met with who seemed both gentle and strong, and whose tastes harmonize with my own. But you don't know her, and never will. You have only learned external facts about the Jocelyns, and out of

your prejudices have created a family of underbred people that does not exist. Their crime of comparative poverty I cannot dispute. I have not made the prudential inquiries which you and father have gone into so carefully. But your logic is inexorable. As you suggest, I could not earn enough myself to provide a wife with hairpins. The slight considerations of happiness, and the fact that Miss Jocelyn might aid me in becoming something more than a shadow among men, are not to be urged against the solid reasons you have named."

"Young people always give a tragic aspect to these crude passing fancies. I have known 'blighted happiness' to bud and blossom again so often that you must pardon me if I act rather on the ground of experience and good sense. An unsuitable alliance may bring brief gratification and pleasure, but never happiness, never lasting and solid content."

"Well, mother, I am not strong enough to argue with you, either in the abstract or as to these 'wise saws' which so mangle my wretched self," and with the air of one exhausted and defeated he languidly went to his room.

Mrs. Arnold frowned as she muttered, "He makes no promise to cease visiting the girl." After a moment she added, even more bitterly, "I doubt whether he could keep such a promise; therefore my will must supply his lack of decision;" and she certainly appeared capable of making good this deficiency in several human atoms.

If she could have imparted some of her firmness and resolution to Martin Jocelyn, they would have been among the most useful gifts a man ever received. As the

stanchness of a ship is tested by the storm, so a crisis in his experience was approaching which would test his courage, his fortitude, and the general soundness of his manhood. Alas! the test would find him wanting. That night, for the first time in his life, he came home with a step a trifle unsteady. Innocent Mrs. Jocelyn did not note that anything was amiss. She was busy putting her home into its usual pretty order after the breezy, gusty evening always occasioned by one of Belle's informal companies. She observed that her husband had recovered more than his wonted cheerfulness, and seemed indeed as gay as Belle herself. Lounging on a sofa, he laughed at his wife and petted her more than usual, assuring her that her step was as light, and that she still looked as young and pretty as any of the girls who had tripped through the parlors that evening.

The trusting, happy wife grew so rosy with pleasure, and her tread was so elastic from maternal pride and exultation at the prospects of her daughters, that his compliments seemed scarcely exaggerated.

"Never fear, Nan," he said, in a gush of feeling; "I'll take care of you whatever happens," and the glad smile she turned upon him proved that she doubted his words no more than her own existence.

They were eminently proper words for a husband to address to his wife, but the circumstances under which they were uttered made them maudlin sentiment rather than a manly pledge. As spoken, they were so ominous that the loving woman might well have trembled and lost her girlish flush. But even through the lurid hopes and vague prospects