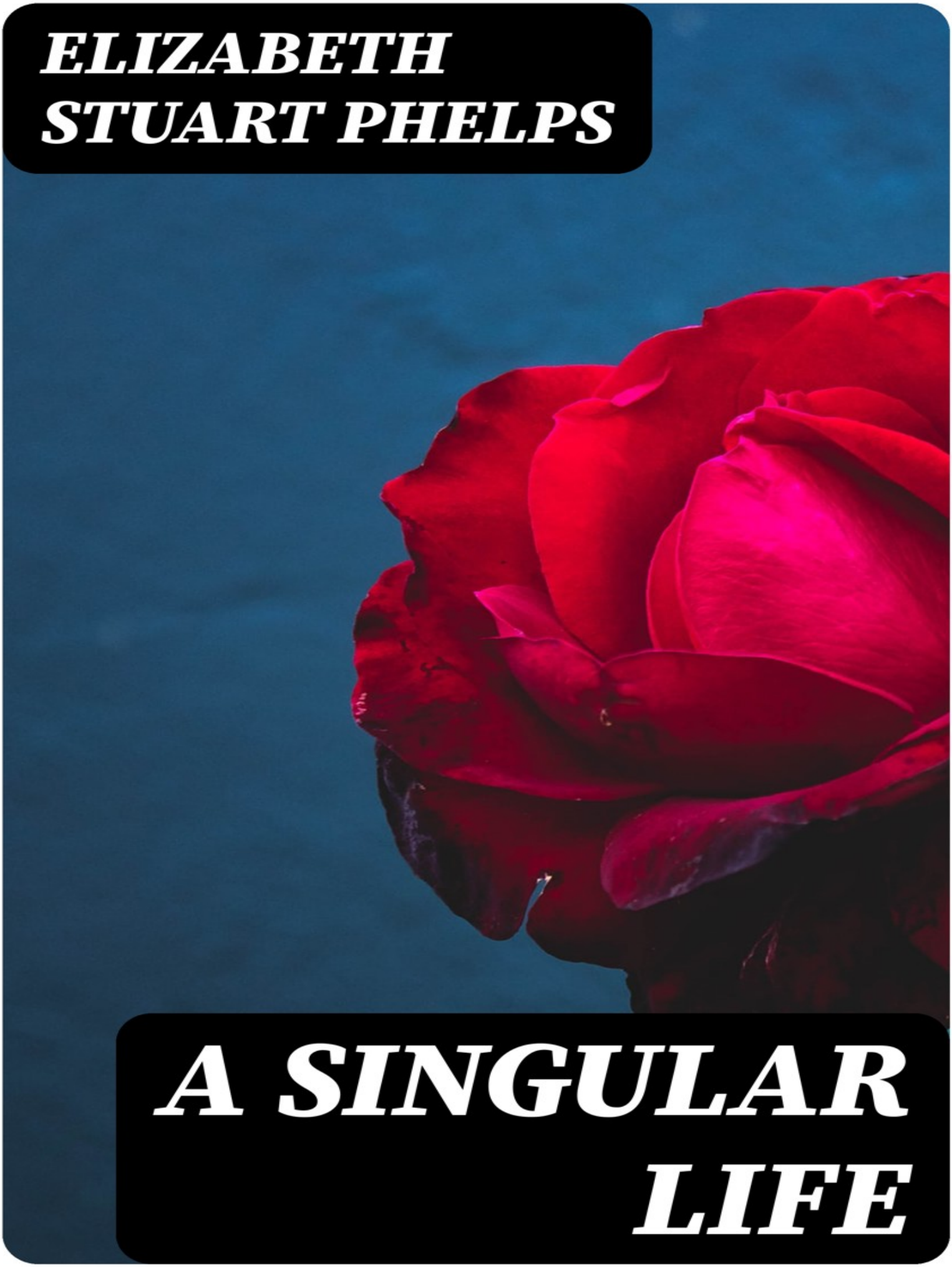
ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS



# A SINGULAR LIFE

**Elizabeth Stuart Phelps**

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# I.

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There were seven of them at the table that day, and they were talking about heredity. At least they were talking about whatever stood for heredity at the date of our history. The word had penetrated to religious circles at the time; but it was still interpreted with a free personal translation.

Perhaps there is no greater curiosity of its kind than that of a group of theological students (chiefly in their junior year) discussing science. It is not certain that the tendencies of the Seminary club dinner are not in themselves materialistic. The great law of denial belongs to the powerful forces of life, whether the case be one of coolish baked beans, or an unrequited affection. That the thing we have not is the thing we would have, neither you nor I nor the junior may deny; and it is quite probable that these young men set an undue value upon a game dinner and *entrées*, which was not without its reactionary effect upon their philosophy.

Jaynes, for instance, had been reading Huxley. Jaynes was a stout man, and short, with those round eyeglasses by which oculists delight in deforming round people. He confessed that he was impressed by the argument. He said:—

“Varieties arise, we do not know why; and if it should be probable that the majority of varieties have arisen in a spontaneous manner”—

“A little vinegar, Jaynes, if you please,” interrupted Tompkinton gently. Tompkinton was long and lean. His hair

was thin, and scraggled about his ears, which were not small. His hands were thin. His clear blue eye had an absent look. In cold weather he wore an old army cape of his father's. He studied much without a fire, for the club board at the "short price" cost him two dollars and seventy-five cents a week. His boots were old, and he had no gloves and a cough. He came from the State of New Hampshire.

Then there was Fenton: a snug little fellow, who took honors at Amherst; a man who never spent more than five hundred a year in his life, yet always wore clean linen and a tolerable coat, had a stylish cut to his hair, and went to Boston occasionally to a concert. It was even reported that he had been to see Booth. But the Faculty discredited the report. Besides, he had what was known as "a gift at prayer."

Fenton was rather a popular man, and when he spoke in answer to Holt (who observed that *he* considered Huxley's Descent of Man an infidel book) he was listened to with marked attention.

Holt was in the Special Course. He was a converted brakeman from the Hecla and St. Mary's, a flourishing Western railway. Holt, being the only student present who had not received any undue measure of collegiate culture, was treated with marked courtesy by his more liberally educated fellow-students.

"We are reading Darwin up at my room, two or three of us, after dinner," observed Fenton kindly. "We should be happy to have you join us sometimes, Holt."

Holt blinked at the speaker with that uncertain motion of the eyelids which means half intellectual confusion, and half

personal embarrassment. Not a man of these young Christians had smiled; yet the Special Course student, being no natural fool, vaguely perceived that something had gone wrong.

But Fenton was vivaciously discussing last November's ball games with his *vis-à-vis*, a middler whose name is unknown to history. It was some time before he said, looking far down the long table:—

"Bayard, who is it that says it takes three generations to make a gentleman?"

"Why, Holmes, I suppose," answered he who was addressed. "Who else would be likely to say it?"

"Any of the Avonsons might have said it," observed a gentlemanly fellow from the extreme end of the table; he returned his spoon to his saucer as he spoke. There were several students at the club who did not drink with their spoons in their teacups, and even laid the knife and fork in parallels upon the plate, and this was one of the men. He had an effective and tenderly cherished mustache. He was, on the whole, a handsome man. It was thought that he would settle over a city parish.

"I doubt if there was ever an Avonson who could have said it, Bent," replied Bayard. The Avonsons were a prominent New England family, not unknown to diplomacy and letters, nor even to Holt of the Hecla and St. Mary's.

"But why, then?" persisted Bent.

"They have believed it too thoroughly and too long to say anything so fine."

Bent raised an interrogative eyebrow.

“You won’t understand,” returned Bayard, smiling. All the fellows turned towards Bayard when he smiled; it was a habit they had. “You aren’t expected to. *You* are destined for the Episcopal Church.”

“I see the connection less than ever,” Bent maintained. “But I scent heresy somewhere. You are doomed to the stake, Bayard. That is clear as—as the Latin fathers. Have an apple,—do. It’s sour, but sound. It’s Baldwin year, or we shouldn’t get them except Sundays.”

Bayard mechanically took the apple, and laid it down untouched. His eye wandered up the cold length of the long table decorated with stone china. Somehow, few aspects of the theological life struck his imagination so typically as a big vegetable dish piled with cold, unrelieved Baldwins, to be served for after-dinner fruit on a winter day. In the kind of mental chill which the smallest of causes may throw over a nature like his, Bayard did not exert himself to reply to his classmate, but fell into one of the sudden silences for which he was marked.

“My father,” observed the New Hampshire man quietly, “was a farmer. He dug his own potatoes the day before he enlisted. Perhaps I am no judge, but I always thought he was a gentleman—when I was a little boy.”

Tompkinton shouldered himself out of the conversation, asked one of the fellows what hour the Professor had decided on for eternal punishment, and went out into the wintry air, taking long strides to the lecture-room, with his notebook under the old blue army cape, of which the northwest wind flung up the scarlet side.

“Has the Professor tea’d you yet, Bent?” asked Bayard, rousing, perhaps a little too obviously anxious to turn the channels of conversation. Genealogical problems at best, and in picked company, are unsafe topics; hence peculiarly dangerous at a club table of poor theologues, half of whom must, in the nature of things, be forcing their way into social conditions wholly unknown to their past. Bayard was quicker than the other men to think of such things.

“Oh yes,” said Bent, with a slightly twitching mustache. “Ten of us at a time in alphabetical order. I came the first night, being a B. Madam his wife and Mademoiselle his daughter were present, the only ladies against such a lot of us. I pitied them. But Miss Carruth seemed to pity us. She showed me her photograph book, and some Swiss pickle forks—carved. Then she asked me if I read Comte. And then her mother asked me how many of the class had received calls. Then the Professor told some stories about a Baptist minister. And so by and by we came away. It was an abandoned hour—for Cesarea. It was ten o’clock.”

“I was in town that night,” observed Bayard. “I had to send my regrets.”

“If you were in town, why couldn’t you go?” asked the middler.

“I mean that I was out of town. I was in Boston. I had gone home,” explained Bayard pleasantly.

“You won’t come in now till after the Z’s,” suggested Fenton quickly; “or else you’ll be left over till the postgraduates take turn, and the B’s come on again.”

The Baldwin apples were all eaten now, and the stone china was disappearing from the long table in detachments.

Jaynes and the Special Course man had followed Tompkinton, and the middler and Bent now pushed back their chairs. Bayard remained a moment to ask after the landlady’s neuralgia,—he was one of the men who do not economize sympathy without more effort than its repression is usually worth,—and Fenton waited for him in the cold hall. The two young men shoved their shoulders into their overcoats sturdily, and walked across the Seminary green together to their rooms.

Strictly speaking, one should say the Seminary “white.” It was midwinter, and on top of Cesarea Hill. From the four corners of the earth the winds of heaven blew, and beat against that spot; to it the first snowflake flew, and on it the last blizzard fell. Were the winters longer and the summers hotter in Cesarea than in other places? So thought the theologues in the old draughty, shaking Seminary dormitories dignified by time and native talent with the name of “halls.”

Young Bayard trod the icy path to his own particular hall (Galilee was its name) with the chronic homesickness of a city-bred man forced through a New England country winter under circumstances which forbade him to find fault with it. His profession and his seminary were his own choice; he had never been conscious of wavering in it, or caught in grumbling about it, but sometimes he felt that if he had been brought up differently,—like Tompkinton, for instance, not to say Holt,—he should have expended less of that vitality necessary to any kind of success in the simple process of enduring the unfamiliar.

“How was the gale round your room last night?” inquired young Fenton, as the two climbed the frozen terraces, and leaped over the chains that hung between rows of stunted posts set at regular intervals in front of the Seminary buildings. For what purpose these stone dwarfs staggered there, no one but the founders of the institution knew; and they had been in their graves too long to tell.

“It made me think of my uncle’s house,” observed Bayard.

“By force of contrast? Yes. I never lived in Beacon Street. But I can guess. I pity you in that northwest corner. My mother sent me a soapstone by express last week. I should have been dead, I should have been frozen stark, without it. You heat it, you know, on top of the base-burner, and tuck it in the sheets. Then you forget and kick it out when you’re asleep, and it thumps on the fellow’s head in the room below, and he blackguards you for it through the ceiling. Better get one.”

“Are you really *comfortable*—all night?” asked Bayard wistfully. “I haven’t thought about being warm or any of those luxuries since I came here. I expected to rough it. I mean to toughen myself.”

In his heart he was repeating certain old words which ran like this: Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. But they did not come to his lips. He was as afraid of cant as too many young theologues are of sincere simplicity.

“Oh, come, Bayard!” urged the other. “There’s where you miss it. Why not be comfortable? I don’t see that Christianity and misery need be identical. You are certain to have a tough time if you go on as you begin. Talk about election,

foreordination, predestination! You take the whole set of condemnatory doctrines into your hands and settle your own fate beforehand. A man doesn't leave Providence any free will who sets out in life as you do."

"Do I strike you that way?" asked the young man anxiously. "If there is anything I abhor, it is a gloomy clergyman!"

"There you are again! Now I'm not finding fault with you," began Fenton, settling his chin in his comfortable way. "Your soul is all nerves, man. It is a ganglion. You need more tissue round it—like me."

The two young men stood at the foot of the bare, wooden stairs in the cold entry of Galilee Hall, at the dividing of their ways. It was the usual luck of the other that he should have a southwest room, first floor. But Bayard climbed to his northwest third-story corner uncomplainingly. It occurred to him to say that there were objects in life as important, on the whole, as being comfortable. But he did not. He only asked if the lectures on the Nicene Creed were to be continued at four, and went on, shivering, to his room.

It was a bitter February afternoon, and the wind blew the wrong way for northwest corners. Bayard had spent the day in coddling his big base-burner, which now rewarded him by a decent glow as he entered his study. He had no chum, and thanked God for it; he curled into the shell of his solitude contentedly, and turned to his books at once, plunging headlong into the gulf of the Nicene Creed. At the end of two hours he got up, shivering. The subject was colder than the climate, and he felt congealed to the soul. He flung open his bedroom door. An icy breath came from that monastic

cell. He thought, “I really must get some double windows.” He had purposely refrained all winter from this luxury lest he should seem to have more comforts than his poorer classmates.

The early winter sunset was coming on, and Cesarea Hill was wrapping herself in gold and purple and in silver sheen to meet it. Bayard went to his window, and stood, with his hands locked behind him, looking abroad.

The Seminary lawns (old Cesareans spoke of them as the Seminary “yard”), encrusted in two feet of snow, took on the evening colors in great sweeps, as if made by one or two strokes of a mighty brush. The transverse paths that cut across the snow, under rows of ancient elm-trees, had the shape of a cross. The delicate, bare branches of the elms were etched against a blazing west. Above, the metallic sky hung cold and clear. A few students were crossing the lawns, tripping and slipping on the paths of gray and glittering ice. In the wide street beyond, a number of people were breasting the blast, valiantly prepared for a mile’s walk to the evening mail. The night threatened to be very cold. Across the street, the Professors’ houses stood in a serious row. Beyond them, the horizon line ran to Wachusett, undisturbed; and the hill and valley view melted into noble outlines under snow and sun.

Emanuel Bayard stood at his window looking across to the hills. The setting sun shone full in his face. I see no reason why one should hesitate to give a man full credit for personal beauty because one chances to be his biographer, and do not hesitate to say that the attractiveness of this young man was extraordinary.

He was of slender build, but tall, and with good square shoulders that sturdily supported his head. He had the forehead of a student, the carriage of a man of society, and the beauty of a myth, or a saint, which may be the same thing. His complexion was a trifle fair for a man; his brown hair, shot with gold, curled defiantly all over his head; when he first decided to study theology, he used to try to brush it straight, but he might as well have tried to brush Antinous out of fable. He had bright, human, healthy color, and, as has been intimated, a remarkable smile. His lips were delicately cut; they curved and trembled with almost pitiful responsiveness to impressions. Thought and feeling chased over his face like the tints of a vibrating prism cast on a white surface. It was in his eyes that the extreme sensitiveness of his nature seemed to concentrate and strengthen into repose. His nearest friend might have said of Bayard's eyes, They are hazel, and said no more. Some stranger in the street, to whom the perception of the unusual was given, might have passed him, and said, That man's eyes are living light. Indeed, strangers often moved back and looked again at him; while people who knew him best sometimes turned away from him uncomfortably, as if he blinded them. This power to dazzle, which we often see in merely clear-minded persons with a well-painted iris, may not be associated in the least with the higher nature, but even the contrary. It was the peculiarity about Bayard that his eye seemed to be the highest as well as the brightest fact in any given personal situation. Neither a prophet nor a cut-throat would for an instant have questioned the spiritual supremacy of the man.

In Paris, once, he was thrown in the way of a celebrated adventuress, and she confessed to him, sobbing, as if he had been her priest, within an hour. Rank is of the soul, and Bayard's was unmistakable. Beauty like his is as candid, in its way, as certain forms of vice. It is impossible for him to conceal his descent who is born a spiritual prince.

But the young man was thinking nothing of this as he faced the cold and gleaming sky, to see the sun drop just to the north of Wachusett, as he had done so many winter nights since he took possession of the northwest corner of Galilee Hall. If his musing had been strictly translated into words, "I must prove my rank," he would have said.

As he stood mute and rapt, seeming to bestow more brilliance than he took from it on the afterglow that filled the grim old room, his eye rested on the line of Professors' houses that stood between him and his sunset, and musingly traveled from ancient roof to roof till it reached the house behind which the sun had dropped. This house was not built by the pious founders, and had a certain impertinent, worldly air as of a Professor with property, or a committee of the Trustees who conceded more than was expected by the Westminster Catechism to contemporaneous ease and architecture. It was in fact a fashionable modern building, a Queen Anne country house, neither more nor less.

As Bayard's glance reached the home of his theological Professor it idly fell upon the second-story front window, where signs of motion chanced to arrest his attention. In this window the drawn shade was slowly raised, and the lace drapery curtains parted. A woman's figure stood for a

moment between the curtains. There were western windows, also, to the room, and the still burning light shot through from side to side of the wing. In it she could be seen clearly: she stood with raised arm and hand; there was something so warm and womanly and rich in the outlines of that remote figure that the young man would have been no young man if his glance had not rested upon it.

After a moment’s perceptible hesitation he turned away; then stepped back and drew down his old white cotton shade.

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## II.

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More than thirty years before the day of this biography, a blue-eyed girl sat in her brother’s home in Beacon Street, weighing the problem which even then had begun to shake the social world every year at crocus time, Where shall we spend the summer?

When Mary Worcester’s gentle mind, wavering between the hills and the shore with the pleasant agitation of a girl who has never known any compulsion severer than her own young choice upon her fate, turned in the direction of the mountain village which her mother used to fancy, it seemed the least important of acts or facts, and was so regarded by her brother; for Hermon Worcester was a preoccupied young man, more absorbed in adding to his fortune, inherited in wool, than in studying the natural history of an attractive orphaned younger sister, left, obviously, by Providence upon his hands.

So, properly chaperoned and luxuriously outfitted, to the hills went Mary Worcester that conclusive summer of her life; and the village of Bethlehem—a handful then, a hamlet, if one should compare it with the luxurious and important place of resort known to our own day—received, as unconsciously as she gave, the presence of this young visitor whose lot was destined to become so fair a leaf bound in with the village history.

They are not usually the decisions to which we give the most thought that most control our lives, but those to which we give the least; and this city girl glided into her country holiday as unaware as the rest of us are when we cross the little misty space that separates freedom from fate.

She was not an extraordinary girl; unless we should consider extraordinary a certain kind of moral beauty to which the delicacy of her face and form gave marked expression. Such beauty she assuredly possessed. Her head had a certain poise never to be found except in women to whom we may apply the beautiful adjective “high-minded.” Her eyes and the curve of her lip bore this out; and she had the quality of voice no more to be copied by a woman of the world than a pure heart is to be imitated by a schemer.

She was not an intellectual woman in our modern sense of the word. She was a bright, gentle girl; more devout than her mates who rode with her on picnics from the hotel, but as ready to be happy as the rest; she had a certain sweet merriment, or merry sweetness, peculiar to herself, and of which life and trouble never entirely robbed her. If we add to this that she had the angelic obstinacy sometimes to be found in unobtrusive and amiable people, her story, so far

as it concerns us, need not be the enigma that it always remained to many of those who knew her best. In this summer of which we speak, when Miss Worcester had been for a couple of weeks among the hills, it befell that her party, for some cause not important enough to trace, moved into lodgings across the road from the hotel, where they commanded a cottage otherwise occupied only by the proprietor or tenant of the house. The cottage, after the fashion of its kind, was white of surface, green of blinds, and calm of demeanor. Its low front windows swept the great horizon of Bethlehem without obstruction, and when one drew the green-paper shade of the upper chamber in the rear, a tall pine—one of fourscore, the picket of a rich and sombre grove—brushed into one's face, and eyed one like a grave, superior rustic who knew his worth and one's own, and was not to be distanced.

Mary Worcester, in a white, thin dress, was sitting by this window one July day, looking down on the long fingers of the pine bough, when she was disturbed by a sudden agitation in the green heart of the tree. The boughs shook and parted, and the branch that lay over upon her window-sill trembled, yielded, started, gave a smart, stinging blow upon her bending cheek, and swept aside. She sprang back to save her eyes, and, in doing so, perceived the top round of a ladder rising from the tree.

She was startled for the instant; but observing that the ladder continued to rise steadily, and had evidently higher aspirations than her window-sill, she remained where she was. At this moment a voice from below delicately suggested that if any of the ladies were upstairs they might

like to draw the shade, as some repairs were necessary upon the roof. The speaker was sorry to incommode anybody, and would withdraw as soon as possible.

Owing, perhaps, to that kind of modesty which feels an embarrassment at being recognized, the young girl did not draw her shade, but moved into the adjoining room while the carpenter climbed the ladder. The doors and windows were open through, and she stood for a moment uncertain, her light dress swaying in the draught. Then, turning, she looked back at the mechanic. At that moment his face and shoulders were on a level with her window. To her surprise, she recognized the man as their host, the owner of the cottage.

In a few moments a stout arm struck the roof over her head, and resounding blows shook the cottage sturdily, while a few old shingles flew past her window and troubled the pine-tree, which, shivering at the indignity, cast them to the moss below.

To escape the clamor, Miss Worcester tossed on her straw hat and fled below stairs. Her friends were all out and the house was empty. She wandered about such of the lower rooms as she had the right to enter, for a few moments, and then strolled out aimlessly into the grove. She flung herself down on the pine needles in the idle reverie of youth and ease and health; no graver purpose in life than to escape the noise of a shingler’s hammer appeared to her. When the blows upon the roof had ceased she rose and went back. At the foot of the pine-tree, with his ladder on his shoulder, unexpectedly stood the man.

He was a well-built man, young and attractive to the eye. He did not look as rugged as his class, and showed, proportionately, more refinement. His eyes were dark and large, and had the sadness of a misunderstood dog. He raised them in one swift look to the young girl. She drifted by in her white dress with her straw hat on her arm; her hair was tumbled and bright; a little spot on one cheek, where she had rested it upon her arm, burned red. She smiled and said something, she did not know what. The mechanic lifted his old straw hat: the little act had the ease of town-bred gentlemen; something about it surprised the young lady, and she lingered a moment.

“And so you mend the roof for us?” she said, with her merry sweetness. “We thank you, sir.”

“It is my business,” replied the mechanic a little coldly. But his eyes were not cold, and they regarded her with deferent though daring steadiness.

“You are then the carpenter. Are you sure?” she persisted audaciously.

“That,” replied her host, after a silence in which she heard her own heart leap, “is for you to determine.” He bowed, shouldered the ladder which he had let drop, and passed on into the shed with it. His lodger, with burning cheeks, fled to her room, and drew down the green-paper shade.

The following day was Sunday, and the city lodgers in a party attended the village church. Mary Worcester, daintily dressed and devoutly inclined, sat with her head bowed upon the rail of the pew before her. When the village choir recited the opening fugue she did not move; but when the

minister’s voice broke the pleasant silence that followed, and the invocatory prayer filled the meeting-house, she lifted her eyes to the pulpit, and behold, he who had shingled the cottage yesterday was the preacher of to-day.

The services took their usual course. The scent of lilacs came in at the open windows of the country church. The rustic choir sang. The minister had an educated voice and agreeable manner. He did not preach a great sermon, but he spoke in a manly fashion, read the Bible without affectation, and prayed like a believer. It was not until the close of the service that he suffered his glance to rest upon the pew occupied by his lodgers, and thus he perceived the deepened color and the gentle agitation of her face. Their eyes met, and the fate of their lives was sealed.

At first they read their idyl with terror in their joy. She by her experience of the world, he by his inexperience thereof, knew what it meant for them to plight their troth. But Almighty Love had laid its hand upon them: not the false god, nor the sorcerer, nor the worldling, nor the mathematician, that steal the name,—none of these masqueraders moved them.

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Mary Worcester and Joseph Bayard sat under the pine-trees of the grove behind the minister’s cottage and faced their fate.

“I am a country parson,” said the young man proudly, “and a carpenter, as your brother will remind you. I learned the trade to put myself through college,—a fresh-water college up in Vermont. Never mind the name. I doubt if he has ever heard of it. My father was the schoolmaster of our

village. He was poor. My mother was an invalid for twenty years. It cost us a good deal to take care of her. After he died, you see it fell to me. I did the best I could for her. She died this spring. I never could go very far away from her. She liked to see me often, and it cost a good deal to get suitable nurses. She needed other things, of course. I was in debt, too, for my education. I've been paying that off by degrees. Take it all, I've got run down, somehow. Mother used to say I had her constitution. The people here called me to supply awhile, but they said I had too poor health to settle without trial. I don't wonder. They don't want a minister to die of consumption on their hands."

He stopped abruptly, and cast a bitter look at the young girl's drooping face to see how these blows struck that gentle surface. She did not lift it, but by the space of a breath she seemed to stir and tremble toward him.

"I love you," said the young man, flinging his thin hands out as if he thrust her from him. "A carpenter-parson, without a dollar or a pulpit he can call his own, and some day doomed to be a sick man at that! Go! I will never ask you to be my wife. Beacon Street! Do you think there is a man in Beacon Street who will ever love you as I do? Try it. Go and try. Go back to your brother. Tell him I scorned to ask you to marry me—for your sake, oh my Love!"

His voice fell into the whisper of unutterable passion and sacrifice, and he covered his face and groaned. Then Mary Worcester lifted her unworldly eyes and looked upon him as a woman looks but once in life, and upon but one.

"But if," she said, "*I* should ask *you*?"

He gasped, and sprang to his feet. Then he saw how she trembled before him. And she stretched up her arms. So he took her to his heart; and before the snow fell upon the hills of Bethlehem she had become his wife.

Life dealt with them as the coldest head on Beacon Street might have predicted. Her brother fell at first into burning anger, and then into a frozen rage. When the thing became inevitable, he treated her civilly, for he was a gentleman; more than that she never sought from him, and did not receive. She married her country parson intelligently, deliberately, and joyously, and shared his lot without an outcry. She knew one year of blessedness, and treasured it as a proof of paradise to come. She knew one such year as the saddest of us would die to know, and the gladdest could not look upon without a pang of divine envy. She knew what love, elect, supreme, and unspotted from the world, as the old words say, can give a woman, and can do for her. And then she reached the chapter where the plot turns in the beautiful, delirious story, and she read the sequel through,—a brave, proud woman, calling herself blessed to the end.

The minister’s health failed, as was to be foreseen. He could not keep his parish, “as she might have known,” said Hermon Worcester to the lady (her name was Rollins, by the way) who had chaperoned that summer party, and whom the brother had never succeeded in forgiving. Joseph Bayard descended from his pulpit to his carpenter’s bench, and his high-born wife did not protest. “A man must feel that he is at work,” she said. She mentioned the circumstance to her brother proudly when she acknowledged the last check; for

she received her mother’s inheritance duly, and spent it rapidly. She supplied the ailing man with such comforts as Bethlehem had never seen. She lavished all the attainable luxuries familiar to her youth upon the invalid in the frozen mountain home. Nothing and no one could restrain her. It was her way, and love’s. That divine compassion which takes possession of a woman’s soul when passion subsides from it swept a torrent of pity and tenderness about the enfeebled man. She persuaded him at last out of the mountain cottage which had watched their courtship and known their honeymoon, and carried him to Italy, where she played the last desperate chances in the game of life and love and death that thousands of women have staked and lost before her.

In the midst of this experiment the two returned abruptly to America, and hid themselves in the Bethlehem cottage; and there, in the late and bitter mountain spring, their boy was born.

The baby was a year old when his father died. Mary Bayard looked at the frozen hills across the freezing grave. In all the world only the mountains seemed to understand her. Her brother came up to the funeral, and politely buried the carpenter, whose widow was civilly invited to return to the home of her youth; but she thanked him, and shook her head.

“I will stay here among our people. They love me, some of them. They all loved him. I have friends here. There is no kindness kinder than that in the hearts of country neighbors. I’ve found that out. Beacon Street has forgotten

me long ago, Hermon. There is nothing left in common between us now."

"At least there is your birth and training!" exclaimed her brother, flushing hotly. "I should think," glancing around the white cottage, crowded with little luxuries that love and ingenuity could hardly convert into comforts (by his standard of comfort) in that place and climate,—"I should think you would like to come back to a good Magee furnace and a trained maid!"

"There have been times"—she began slowly, but checked herself. "Those are gone by now. This is the place where I have been a happy woman."

"There is something in that," replied the man of business in a softer tone. He looked at her a trifle wistfully.

A certain tenderness for her returned in his heart after that. He cared for her as he could, sometimes taking the chilly journey to see her in winter, and spending a part of every summer in the Bethlehem cottage.

Thus he came to discover in himself a root of interest in the boy. When the child was three years old, he induced his sister to come to Boston to consult a famous physician.

"She is dying of no disease," he told the doctor irritably. "She had fine health. That ailing fellow wore it all out. He was a heavy burden. She carried everything—for years. She spent almost all her property on him: it was not trusteed; it is nearly gone; I couldn't help it. She has spent herself in the same way. She is that kind of woman."

"I have seen such," replied the physician gently, "but not too many of them. I may as well tell you at the outset that I can probably do nothing for her."

Nor could he. She lingered, smiling and quiet, in her brother's house for a few months; then begged to be taken home. Fires were kindled in the mountain cottage, and the affectionate villagers brought in their house-plants to welcome her; and there, on the morning after her return, they found her with her cheek turned upon the soft curls of the child's head. The boy was asleep. But he waked when he was spoken to. It was his uncle who took him from his mother's arms.

They buried her beside her husband; and her husband's people wept about her grave, for they had loved this strange and gentle lady; and they cut their white geraniums and heliotrope to bring to the funeral, and sighed when they saw the cottage under the pine grove stripped and closed. For the boy was taken to the home of his mother's girlhood, and reared there as she had been; delicately, and as became a lad of gentle birth, who will do what is expected of him, and live like the rest of his world.

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## III.

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It had always been considered a mistake that the Professors' houses stood on the "morning side" of the street. But this, like many another architectural or social criticism, was of more interest to the critic than to the criticised. In point of fact, the western faces of the dwellings consecrated to the Faculty received the flood tide of the sea of sun that rose and ebbed between Cesarea and Wachusett. A man's study, a child's nursery, a woman's

sewing-room, fled the front of the house as a matter of course; and the “afternoon side” of the dwelling welcomed them bountifully.

As Professor Carruth had been heard to say, that side of the street on which a man is born may determine his character and fate beyond repeal. The observation, if true, is tenfold truer of a woman, to whom a house is a shell, a prison, or a chrysalis.

The Professor’s daughter, who had not been born in Cesarea, but in the city of New York, took turns at viewing her father’s home in one of these threefold aspects. On that winter day of which we have already spoken, she might, if urged to it, have selected the least complimentary of the three terms. The day had been bleak, bright, and interminable. She had tried to take the morning walk to the post-office, which all able-bodied Cesareans penitentially performed six days in the week; and had been blown home in that state just so far from adding another to the list of “deaths from exposure” that one gets no sympathy, and yet so near to this result that one must sit over the register the rest of the morning to thaw out.

After dinner she had conscientiously resumed her study of Herbert Spencer’s Law of Rhythm, but had tossed the book away impatiently,—she was metaphysical only when she was bored,—and had joined her mother at the weekly mending-basket. The cold, she averred, had struck in. Her brain was turning to an icicle—like that. She pointed to the snow-man which the boys in the fitting-school had built in front of the pump that supplied their dormitories with ice-water for toilet uses; this was carried the length of the

street in dripping pails whose overflow froze upon one’s boots.

There had been a rain before this last freeze, and the head of the snow-man (carefully moulded, and quite Greek) had turned into a solid ball of ice.

This chilly gentleman rose, imposingly from behind a desk of snow. Manuscripts of sleet lay in his frozen hand. An old silk hat, well glazed with drippings from the elm-tree, was pitched irreverently upon the back of his head.

“They say,” replied Mrs. Carruth complainingly, “that the snow-man is meant to take off one of the Professors.”

“Do they? I should think he might be. Which one?” answered the Professor’s daughter. Her languid eyes warmed into merriment. “I call that fun.”

“I call it irreverent,” sighed the Professor’s wife. “I call it profane.”

“Now, Mother!” The young lady laid a green, theological stocking across her shapely knee, and pulled the toe through the foot argumentatively. “Don’t you think that is a little over-emphasized?”

Mrs. Carruth lifted her mild, feminine countenance from that shirt of the Professor’s which she always found absorbing,—the one whose button-holes gave out, while the buttons stayed on. She regarded her daughter with a puzzled disapproval. She was not used to such phrases as “over-emphasis” when she was young.

“Helen, Helen,” she complained, “you do not realize what a trial you are to me. If there is anything sacrilegious or heretical to be found anywhere, you are sure to—to—you are certain to find it interesting,” ended the mother vaguely.

“See, Mother! See!” interrupted Helen. Her laugh bubbled merrily through the sewing-room. “Just look out of the window, and see! The boys have stuck a whisk broom for a feather in the snow professor’s hat! And now they’re giving him spectacles and a fountain pen. What delicious heresy, isn’t it, Mother? Come and look!”

But after these trifling and too frequent conflicts with her mother, Helen never failed to feel a certain reaction and depression. She evaded the mending-basket that afternoon as soon as possible, and slipped into her own room; which, as we have said, was in a wing of the house, and looked from east to west. She could not see the snow professor here. Nobody now accused her of heresy. The shouts of the boys had begun to die away. Only the mountains and the great intervale were peacefully visible from the warm window. Through the cold one the Theological Seminary occupied the perspective solidly.

Nature had done a good deal for the Christian religion, or at least for that view of it represented by our Seminary, when that institution was established at Cesarea, a matter of nearly a century ago. But art had not in this instance proved herself the handmaid of religion. The theological buildings, a row of three,—Galilee and Damascus Halls to right and left of the ancient chapel,—rose grimly against the cold Cesarea sky. These buildings were all of brick, red, rectangular, and unrelieved; as barren of ornament or broken lines as a packing-box, and yet curiously possessed of a certain dignity of their own; such as we see in aged country folk unfashionably dressed, but sure of their local position. Not a tremor seemed ever to disturb the calm, red

faces of these old buildings, when the pretty chapel and the graceful library of modern taste crept in under the elms of the Seminary green to console the spirit of the contemporary Cesarean, who has visited the Louvre and the Vatican as often as the salary will allow; who has tickets to the Symphony Concerts in Boston, and feels no longer obliged to conceal the fact that he occasionally witnesses a Shakespearean play.

Helen Carruth, for one, did not object to the old red boxes, and held them in respect; not for their architectural qualities, it must be owned, nor because of the presence therein of a hundred young men for whose united or separate personalities she had never cared a fig. But of the Cesarean sunsets, which are justly famous, she was observant with the enthusiasm of a girl who has so little social occupation that a beautiful landscape is still an object of attention, even of affection. And where does reflected sunset take to itself the particular glory that it takes on Cesarea Hill?

The Professor’s daughter was in the habit of watching from her eastern window to see that row of old buildings take fire from the western sky behind her; window after window, four stories of them, thirty-two to a front on either side, and the solemn disused chapel in the midst. It would have been a pleasant sight to any delicate eye; but to the girl, with her religiously trained imagination and unoccupied fancy, it was a beautiful and a poetic one. She had learned to watch for it on sunny days in her lonely Cesarea winters, —between her visits to New York or Boston. Now Damascus Hall, and now Galilee, received the onset of flame; now this