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BY  
MARY J.  
HOLMES.

This was the substance of Morris's letter, which Katy read with streaming eyes, forgetting Saratoga as Morris's solemn words of warning and admonition rang in her ears, and shuddering as she thought of losing the life eternal, of going where Morris would never come, nor any of those she loved the best, unless it were Wilford, who might reproach her with having dragged him there when she could have saved him.

"Keep yourself unspotted from the world," Morris had said, and she repeated it to herself, asking "how shall I do that? how can one be good and fashionable too?"

Then saying her head upon the rock where she was sitting, Katy tried to pray as she had not prayed in months asking that God would teach her what she ought to know and keep her unspotted from the world. But at the Mountain House it is easier to pray than it is at Saratoga, for this summer was crowded with overflowing, its streets presenting a fitting picture of Vanity Fair, so full were they of show and gala dress.

At the United States, where Mrs. Cameron stopped, two rooms, for which an enormous price was paid, had been reserved for Mr. and Mrs. Wilford Cameron, and this of itself would have given them a certain eclat, even if there had not been present many who remembered the proud, fastidious bachelor, and were proportionately anxious to see his wife. She came, she saw, she conquered; and within three days after her arrival Katy Cameron was the acknowledged belle of Saratoga, from the United States to the Clarendon.

And Katy, alas, was not quite the same as she was when the mountain ridge had sat with Morris's letter in her hand, praying that its teachings might not be forgotten. Saratoga seemed different from New York, and she plunged into its gaieties, never pausing, never tiring, and seldom giving herself time to think, much less to pray, as Morris had bidden her do. And Wilford, though hardly able to recognize the usually timid Katy in the brilliant woman who led rather than followed, was sure of her faith to him, and so was only proud and gratified to see her bear off the palm from every competitor, while Juno, though she quarreled with the shadow into which she was so completely thrown, enjoyed the eclat cast upon their party by the presence of Mrs. Wilford, who had passed beyond her criticism. Sybil Grandon, too, stood back in wonder that a simple country girl should win and wear the laurels she had so long claimed as her own; but as there was no help for it she contented herself as best she could with the admiration she did receive, and whenever opportunity occurred, said bitter things of Mrs. Wilford, whose parents and low estate were through her pretty generally known. But it did not matter there what Katy had been; the people took her for what she was now, and Sybil's glory faded like the early dawn in the coming of the full day.

As it had been at Saratoga, so it was at Newport. Urged on by Mrs. Cameron and Bell, who enjoyed her notoriety, Katy plunged into the mad excitement of dancing and driving and coquetting, until Wilford himself became uneasy, locking her once in her room, where she was sleeping after dinner, and conveniently forgetting to release her until after the departure at evening of some young men from Cambridge, whose attentions to the Ocean House belle had been more strongly marked than was altogether agreeable to him. Of course it was a mistake—the locking of the door—and a great oversight in him not to have remembered it sooner, he said to Katy, by way of apology; and Katy, with no suspicion of the truth, laughed merrily at the joke repeating it down stairs to the old dowager, who shrugged their shoulders meaningly and whispered to each other that it might be well if more young wives were locked into their rooms and thus kept out of mischief.

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Though flattered, caressed, and admired, Katy was not doing herself much credit at Newport; but save Wilford, there was no one to raise a warning voice, until Mark Ray came down for a few days' respite from the heated city, where he had spent the entire summer, taking charge of the business which belonged as much to Wilford as to himself. But Wilford had a wife; it was more necessary that he should leave, Mark had argued; his time would come by and by. And so he had remained at home until the last of August, when he appeared suddenly at the Ocean House one night when Katy, in her airy robes and child-like simplicity, was breaking hearts by the score. Like others, Mark was charmed, and not a little proud for Katy's sake, to see her thus appreciated; but when one day's experience had shown him more, and given him a look behind the scenes, he trembled for her, knowing how hard it would be for her to come out of that sea of dissipation as pure and spotless as she went in.

"If I were her brother I would warn her that her present career is not one upon which she will look back with pleasure when the excitement is over," he said to himself; "but if Wilford is satisfied it is not for me to interfere. It is surely nothing to me what Katy Cameron does," he kept repeating to himself; but as often as he said it there came before him a pale, anxious face, shaded with Helen Lennox's hands of hair, and Helen Lennox's voice whispered to him: "Save Katy, for my sake," and so next day, when Mark found himself alone with Katy, while most of the guests were at the beach, he questioned her of her life at Saratoga and Newport, and gradually, as he talked, there crept into Katy's heart a suspicion that he was not pleased with her account, or with what he had seen of her since his arrival.

mer of coming, and he understands it."

### CHAPTER XX.

The last day of summer was dying out in a fierce storm of rain which swept in sheets across the Silvertown hills, hiding the pond from view, and beating against the windows of the farm-house, whose inmates were nevertheless unmindful of the storm save as they hoped the morning would prove bright and fair, such as the day should be which brought them back their Katy. Nearly worn out with constant reference was her letter, the mother catching it up from time to time to read the part referring to herself, where Katy had told how blessed it would be "to rest again on mother's bed," just as she had so often wished to do, "and hear mother's voice," the deacon spelling out by his spluttering tallow candle, with its long, smoky wick, what she had said of "darling old Uncle Eph," and the rides into the fields; Aunt Betsy, too, reading mostly from memory the words: "Good old Aunt Betsy, with her skirts so limp and short, tell her she will look handsomer to me than the fairest belle at Newport;" and as often as Aunt Betsy read it she would ejaculate: "The land! what kind of company must that Helen have kept?" wondering next if Helen had never written of the hoop, for which she paid a dollar, and which was carefully hung in her closet, waiting for the event of to-morrow, while the hem of her pongee had been let down and one breadth gored to accommodate the hoop. On the whole, Aunt Betsy expected to make a stylish appearance before the little lady of whom she stood in awe, always speaking of her to the neighbors as "My niece, Miss Cammen, from New York," and taking good care to report what she had heard of "Miss Cammen's" costly dress and the grandeur of her house, where the furniture of the best chamber cost over fifteen hundred dollars.

"What could it be?" Aunt Betsy had asked in her simplicity, feeling an increased respect for Katy, and consenting the more readily to the change in her pongee, as suggested to her by Helen.

But that was for to-morrow when Katy came; to-night she only wore a dotted brown, whose hem just reached the top of her "bootees," as she went to strain the milk brought in by Uncle Ephraim, while Helen took her position near the window, looking drearily out upon the leaden clouds, and hoping it would brighten before the morning. Like the others, Helen had read Katy's letter many times, dwelling longest upon the part which said: "I have been so bad, so frivolous and wicked here at Newport, that it will be a relief to make you my confession, depending, as I do, upon your love to grant me absolution."

From a family in Silvertown, who had spent a few days at a private house in Newport, Helen had heard something of her sister's life; the lady had seen her once driving a tandem down the avenue, with Wilford at her side giving her instructions. Since then there had been some anxiety felt for her at the farm-house, and more than Dr. Grant had prayed that she might be kept unspotted from the world; but when her letter came, so full of love and self-reproaches, the burden was lifted, and there was nothing to mar the anticipations of the event for which they had made so many preparations, Uncle Ephraim going to the expense of buying at auction a half-worn covered buggy, which he fancied would suit Katy better than the corn-colored wagon in which she used to ride. To pay for this the deacon had parted with the money set aside for the "great coat" he so much needed for the coming winter, his old gray having done him service for fifteen years. But his comfort was nothing compared with Katy's happiness, and so, with his wrinkled face beaming with delight, he had brought home his buggy, putting it carefully in the barn, and saying no one should ride in it till Katy came. With untiring patience the old man mended up his harness, for what he had heard of Katy's driving had impressed him strongly with her powers of house-manship, and raised her somewhat in his respect. Could he have afforded it Uncle Ephraim in his younger days would have been a horse jockey, and even now he liked nothing better than to make Old Whitey run when alone in the strip of woods between his house and the head of the pond.

"Katy inherits her love of horses from me," he said complacently; and with a view of improving Whitey's style and mettle, he took to feeding him on oats, talking to him at times, and telling him who was coming. Dear, simple-hearted Uncle Ephraim! the days which he must have seemed long to him as they did to the other members of his family. But they were all gone now—Katy would be home to-morrow, and with the shutting in of night the candles were lighted in the sitting room, and Helen sat down to her work, wishing it was to-night that Katy was coming. As if in answer to her wish there was the sound of wheels, which stopped before the house, and dropping her work Helen ran quickly to the door, just as from under the dripping umbrella held by a driver boy, a tall young man sprang upon the step, nearly upsetting her, but passing an arm around her shoulders in time to keep her from falling.

"Beg pardon for this assault upon you," the driver said; and then turning to the boy he continued: "It's all right, you need not wait." With a chirrup and a blow the horse started forward, and the mud bespattered vehicle was moving down the road ere Helen had recovered her surprise at recognizing Mark Ray, who shook the rain-drops from his hair, and offering her his hand said in reply to her involuntary exclamation: "I thought it was Katy."

"Shall I infer then that I am less welcome?" and his bright, saucy eyes looked laughingly into hers. Business had brought him to Southbridge, he said, and it was his intention to take the cars that afternoon for New York, but having been detained long-

er than he expected, and not liking the looks of the hotel arrangements, he had decided to presume upon his acquaintance with Dr. Grant, and spend the night at Linwood. "But," said Helen, "it rained so hard and the light from your window was so inviting that I ventured to stop, so here I am, claiming your hospitality until morning, if convenient; if not, I will find my way to Linwood."

There was something in this pleasant familiarity which won Uncle Ephraim at once, and he bade the young man stay, as did Aunt Hannah and Mrs. Lennox, who now for the first time was presented to Mark Ray. Always respectful of the circumstances around him, Mark did so now with so much ease and courteousness as to astonish Helen, and partly that the reserve she had assumed when she found the visitor was from the hated city.

"Are you expecting Mrs. Cameron?" he asked, adding, as Helen explained that she was coming to-morrow. "That is strange. Wilford wrote decidedly that he should be in New York to-morrow. Possibly, though, he does not intend himself to stop."

"I presume not," Helen replied, a weight suddenly lifting from her heart at the prospect of not having to entertain the formidable brother-in-law who, if he staid long, would spoil all her pleasure.

Thus at her table on this point, she grew more talkative, half shilling that her dress was not a shilling calico, or her hair combed back quite so straight, giving her that severe look which Morris had said was unbecoming. It was very smooth and glossy, and Sybil Grandon would have given her best diamond to have had in her own natural right the heavy coil of hair bound so many times around the back of Helen's head, and ornamented with neither ribbon, comb, nor bow. Only a single geranium leaf, with a white scale blossom, was fastened just below the ear, and on the side where Mark could see it best, admiring its effect and forgetting the arrangement of the hair in his admiration of the well-shaped head, bending so industriously over the work which Helen had resumed—not crocheting, nor yet embroidery, but the very homely work of darning Uncle Ephraim's socks, a task which Helen always did, and on that particular night, Helen knew it was not delicate employment, and there was a moment's hesitancy as she wondered what Mark would think—then, with a grim de- light in letting him see that she did not care, she resumed her darning-needle, and as a kind of penance for the flash of pride in which she had indulged, selected from the basket the very coarsest, ugliest sock she could find, stretching out the huge fracture at the heel to its utmost extent, and attacking it with a right good will, while Mark, with a comical look on his face, sat watching her, and her cheeks were growing very red, while her hatred of him was increasing, when he said, abruptly: "You follow my mother's custom, I see. She used to mend my socks on Tuesday nights."

"Your mother mend socks?" and Helen started so suddenly as to run the point of her darning-needle a long way into her thumb, the wound bringing a stream of blood which she tried to wipe away with her handkerchief.

"Bind it tightly round. Let me show you, please," Mark said, and ere she was aware of what she was doing, Helen was quietly permitting the young man to wind her handkerchief around her thumb which he held in his hand, pressing it until the blood ceased flowing, and the sharp pain had abated.

Perhaps Mark liked holding that small, warm hand, even though it were not as white and soft as Helen's; at all events he did hold it until Helen drew it from him with a quick, sudden motion, telling him it would do very well, and she would not trouble him. Mark did not look as if he had been troubled, but went back to his seat and took up the conversation just where the needle had stopped it.

"My mother did not always mend herself, but she caused it to be done, and sometimes helped. I remember she used to say a woman should know how to do everything pertaining to a household, and she carried out her theory in the education of my sister."

"Have you a sister?" Helen asked, now really interested, and listening intently while Mark told her of his only sister Julia, now Mrs. Ernst, whose home was in New Orleans, though she at present was in Paris, and his mother was there with her. "After Julia's marriage, nine years ago, mother went to live with her," he said, "but latterly, as the little Ernest increase so fast, she wished for a more quiet home, and this winter she is coming to New York to keep house for me."

Helen thought she might like Mark's mother, who, he told her, had been twice married, and was now Mrs. Banker, and a widow. She must be different from Mrs. Cameron, and Helen let herself down to another degree of toleration for the man whose mother taught her daughter to mend the family socks. Still there was about her a reserve, which Mark wondered at, for it was not thus that ladies were accustomed to receive his advances. He did not guess that Wilford Cameron stood between him and Helen's good opinion; but when, after the family came in, the conversation turned upon Katy and her life in New York, the secret came out in the sharp, caustic manner with which she spoke of New York and its people.

"It's Will and the Camerons," Mark thought, blaming Helen less than he would have done, if he, too, had not known something of the Cameron pride.

not wish himself away, nor feel indignant at Aunt Betsy's old-fashioned ways, or Uncle Ephraim's scruples, he noticed Aunt Betsy's scruples, it is true, and noticed Uncle Ephraim's grammar; but the sight of Helen sitting there, with so much dignity and self-respect, made him look beyond all else, straight into her open face and clear brown eyes, where there was nothing obnoxious or distasteful. Her language was correct, her manner, saving a little stiffness, lady-like and refined; and Mark enjoyed his situation as an invited guest, making himself so agreeable that Uncle Ephraim forgot his hour of retiring, nor discovered his mistake until, with a loud yawn, Aunt Betsy told him that it was half-past nine, and she was "deeply sleepy."

Owing to Helen's influence there had been a change of the old custom, and instead of the long chapter, through which Uncle Ephraim used to plod so wearily, there were now read the Evening Psalms. Aunt Betsy herself joined in the reading, which she mentally classed with the "quirks," but confessed to herself that it "was most as good as the Bible."

As there were only Prayer Books enough for the family, Helen, in distributing them, purposely passed Mark by, thinking he might not care to join them. But when the verse came round to Helen he quickly drew his chair near to hers, and taking one side of her book, performed his part, while Helen's face grew as red as the blossoms in her hair, and her hand, so near to Mark's, trembled visibly.

"A right nice chap, and not an atom stuck up," was Aunt Betsy's mental comment, and then, as he often will do, Satan followed the saintly woman even to her knees, making her wonder if "Mr. Ray hadn't some notion after Helen."

She hoped not, for she meant that Morris should have Helen, though if 'twas to be it was, and she should not go agin it; and while Aunt Betsy thus settled the case, Uncle Ephraim's prayer ended, and the conscience-smitten woman arose from her knees with the conviction that "the evil one had got the better of her once," mentally asking pardon for her wandering thoughts and promising to do better.

Mark was in no haste to retire, and when Uncle Ephraim offered to conduct him to his room, he frankly answered that he was not sleepy, adding, as he turned to Helen: "Please let me stay until Miss Lennox finishes her socks. There are several pairs yet undarned. I will not detain you, though," he continued, bowing to Uncle Ephraim, who, a little uncertain what to do, finally departed, as did Aunt Hannah and her sister, leaving Helen and her mother to entertain Mark Ray. It had been Mrs. Lennox's first intention to retire also, but a look from Helen kept her, and she sat down by that basket of socks, while Mark wished her away. Awhile they talked of Katy and New York, Mark laboring to convince Helen that its people were not all heartless and fickle, and at last citing his mother as an instance.

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