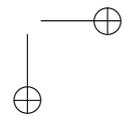
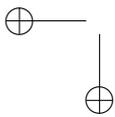


## The Springs



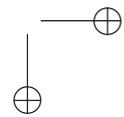
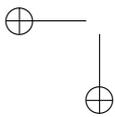


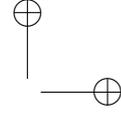


# The Springs

*Anne Goodwin Winslow*

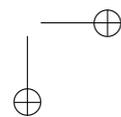
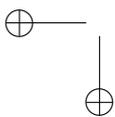
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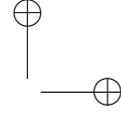
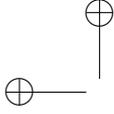




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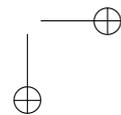
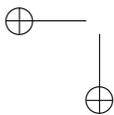
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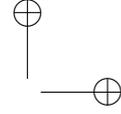
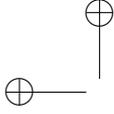




“Count Andrea reminds me so much of Colonel Bodley, at home,” Mrs. Howard said, sitting down on the stone bench where her nephew Roderick was already sitting. It was on a little terrace halfway up from the garden and was seldom passed by those ascending – even those much younger than Mrs. Howard – without this sort of pause, this restful turning to admire the view. The garden at this hour was in shadow, but the Mediterranean was still bright.

Roderick, who had not been coming up or even going down, but just sitting with a book, closed it and gave her his attention. He wanted to hear about Colonel Bodley; the people and things “at home” of which something here was continually reminding his aunt were always interesting to him, though the resemblance she spoke of was apt to





elude him. The region in which they were located was an unfamiliar one to Roderick in both place and time. He had not been “at home” since his early childhood, and Mrs. Howard was really his great-aunt.

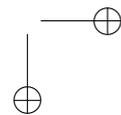
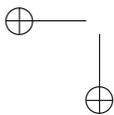
“You mean he looks like him?” he asked her.

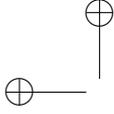
“That too, a little,” Mrs. Howard said, “but I was really thinking of how he liked to go into things – and to pull everybody else in after him. Colonel Bodley would fall into a subject exactly as if he had caught his foot on something and tripped, and then there he’d be; and naturally we would be too polite to leave him. I hate to think of how many things I might never have known if it hadn’t been for Colonel Bodley; much as I hated that.”

“What sort of things?”

“Well, of course he was not as – we used to call it ‘cultured’ – as Count Andrea: he didn’t know as many languages – modern ones; but I believe he could have translated the inscription on that boy down there into English better than we have – the two of us working together. If it really is Latin and not just Italian. They certainly sound alike, for anybody who has forgotten both of them the way I have. *Gelida atque ardentia poma*. It sounds funny, somehow.”

“It isn’t very good Latin,” Roderick said. “Most inscriptions aren’t.”

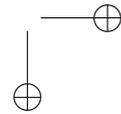
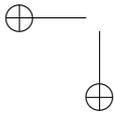


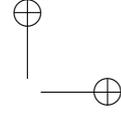
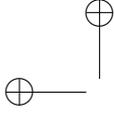


“Well, ‘cold and hot apples’ isn’t good either – not in any language, it seems to me. But Count Andrea won’t mind its being bad in English. We are trying to turn it into a poem. Don’t you think it’s charming – I mean the statue of that boy? I believe he is rather like you, Roderick. Turn just a little the other way – toward Porto Fino –”

Roderick was the eldest of her niece’s children. He was fifteen, and his European upbringing enabled him to bear this scrutiny with less self-consciousness than a boy “at home” might have done. With none at all, in fact. “Imagining the curls,” she said, letting him go, dropping her eyes again to that more distant profile of rocks and sea – the perpetual enchantment. And these children never seemed to notice it; apparently they didn’t think of it as wonderful, or even as scenery; all that beauty was what they saw from any window, any day. It was home; the deep well of their remembrance. For them there would always be blue water and those pines, and whatever else they saw would have to take its chances of reality against that unreal backdrop. And what did she see?

A garden, at any rate. And nobody could say the garden at home was not beautiful too, though it was certainly different from this one. Nothing formal, nothing artificial – which was considered a compliment; yet how could anything be considered





natural that took so much work? “Can’t you ever come out with a rose?” Her father had said that, opening the gate for her mother, whose grubby little hands were full of the weeds she had been pulling. There were no fountains, no statues, in the garden at home; no marble benches to sit on. It was a place of achievement, not of repose. The trees were natural, though; they were too big for anybody to work on, as they did on the trees over here. They stood like sentinels about the house and on the lawn, and then marched off into the wood.

“Do you remember the trees at all, Roderick?”

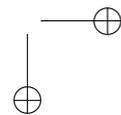
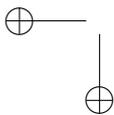
“Not specially; what kind were they?”

“Oaks, poplars – what we call poplars. I wish you remembered them.”

“I wish I remembered lots of things. Sometimes it seems to me I do, when you talk about them. Was there any water around?”

“Not what you would call water; only little streams – that you probably wouldn’t call streams. The only time they did any streaming was after a rain. They would be easy to forget.”

All but the one in the ravine where the springs were; that one had a sandy bottom, memorable for bare feet. The Macgowan children waded there all summer long – Alice, Rose, and a brother, before

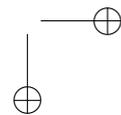
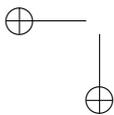




he outgrew such childish things. She had been Alice.

The springs were what fed the stream, but they were hardly distinguishable from other wet places in the ravine unless one took the trouble to part the ferns and poke away the leaves and notice the difference. Then they were seen to really bubble a little, like the beginning of a fountain in the sand. They used to put their faces down to drink and get sand in their mouths and noses. They found new ones every summer, or maybe just forgot the old ones. By the summer the improvement started, they had found them all.

There was clay in some places instead of sand; it was a dim blue color and very smooth; perfect for making little pottery things. Their mother's friend from town, Miss Sallie Kent, wrapped some of it up in a wet cloth to take home with her and do some real modeling. She was an artist. One day when they were sitting by the stream she made their faces out of clay and put them in the sun to bake. "And now I'm going to make you the handsomest man in Memphis," she said. "Find me a nice flat stick." That was a real work of art; little by little the regular features emerged – like the goddess of liberty on the dollar; like George Washington on – whatever he used to be on. It was lunch time when she finished, and some ladies who had driven out



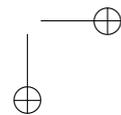
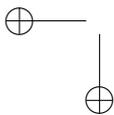


for a picnic and wandered down into the ravine came up and looked at it. "It looks like Hubert Carey," one of them said. Nobody told them it was Hubert Carey; they were perfect strangers; and in a little while they wandered away again, unconscious of the excitement they left behind them. Miss Sallie didn't know she was that good an artist, and Alice and Rose didn't know anybody was. Nor had they been told, up to that time, that the world was a small place; finding its ends could be drawn together that way was an experience they never forgot.

"You might go on with your book, Roderick," Mrs. Howard said, "and I will work some more on the poem. I'd like to read it to you before we go in. I don't suppose you want to help on it?" She was getting the little notebook and pencil out of her knitting-bag.

"I'll criticize it, if you call that help," Roderick said.

"You might suggest a name for it. How would *Garden Eros* do? Count Andrea says you could tell it was meant for Eros even without the inscription, because the arm that is broken off was supposed to be holding a bow; or maybe he said a torch; something symbolic anyhow. You be thinking of a name —"





It took longer than she thought it would to finish. The garden was very still; they could hear the water whispering below them, and the little sound she made with her eraser, and Roderick turning the pages of his book.

*There is a fountain for the dolphin's child,*  
she read at last –

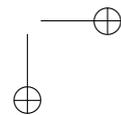
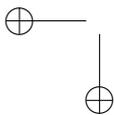
*A greensward for the dancing girls,  
But he has nothing; all the while  
He stands there idle by the ilex tree.  
I have put roses on his mildewed curls –  
He will not smile.*

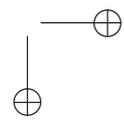
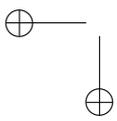
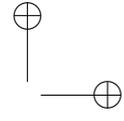
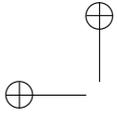
*He is an imitation of a god  
Once favorable to this spot;  
Here olives sweet and bitter grew for him,  
Pomegranates cold and hot –  
GELIDA ATQUE ARDENTA POMA the letters say;  
Though all was done that men could do for him  
He would not stay.*

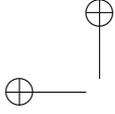
“I decided ‘pomegranates’ sounded better than ‘apples,’” Mrs. Howard said.

“Maybe,” Roderick agreed doubtfully. “But why do you put: ‘He would not stay’? The inscription doesn’t have that.”

“I know,” she said. “But he wouldn’t; he never does – in any garden.”



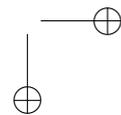
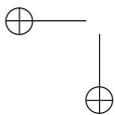




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The improvement started when somebody discovered the medicinal value of the springs. By that time the Macgowan children had stopped wading – even Rose; and certainly they would have had to stop when men with bottles began coming down and taking the water to be analyzed. They took samples from every spring – analyzing the different peas in a pod, their father said. He laughed, but he was interested; they all were; and when the talk about an electric car line started, and the summer hotel, they were no longer interested in anything else. Especially Alice; that was the summer she was fifteen. Rose, who was three years younger, still liked things the way they were, and Roddy was already away at school most of the time and not whole-souled any longer about what went on at home.

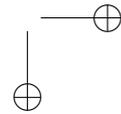
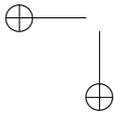
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There was no school to distract Alice. The problem of her education had always been permitted to loom lightly and had become less of a problem every year. She and Rose (who was very bright) had already gone through the little school that was the only accessible seat of learning, and there was apparently no idea of sending them farther afield, at least for the present. “Don’t you think they can study just as well at home?” their mother asked, and their father thought they could. And now with all the wonderful things that were happening right at their door, there seemed less reason than ever for them to be sent away; unless they went to Europe, or somewhere like that. Their father had always talked of sending them abroad to finish their education, and now the price of land would be going up –

It was a wonderful summer; a wonderful year, really, for it took ever so much more time than they had thought it would before things began to show what they were going to be like. Surveyors, architects, and landscape gardeners followed on one another’s heels, and everything they touched was changed. The springs had concrete basins now, with cups chained to them. They even had little pergolas and kiosks built over them, and benches, so people could sit there and go on drinking when it rained. That was the first thing after the car line

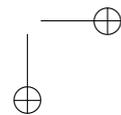
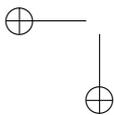




was finished. Then came the hotel, three stories high, with long verandas, and some of the corners round instead of square, like towers, topped off with fancy shingles and a weather vane. It had a rotunda and a mezzanine – unusual names – and was, taken altogether, the prevalent summer hotel of fifty years ago. Alice had never seen one, and though she probably saw no reason why it should not look like that, she had never expected it to do so.

And any time now the world for which it was intended might be expected to arrive; the world in a collective, social sense that she had not thought of before and would now be confronted with for the first time. No doubt some of the people they knew already would be coming too: Colonel Bodley, for instance, said he might try it instead of the Blue Ridge, and Miss Sallie Kent had engaged a room for two weeks in August. It was not for them, however, that it had been prepared. Alice had been going over the hotel from the days of its scaffolding and felt that she knew very well the kind of people for whom it was not intended; they were the only kind she did know; she had to imagine the appropriate ones.

She walked through the parlors, now completely furnished with carpets and lace curtains, and even sat in the untarnished chairs. It made everything

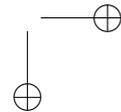
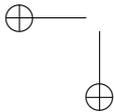




at home look different. Naturally they had never dreamed of having it look like this; but they were thinking of having the house painted – white, as usual. The hotel was two shades of olive green, the darker one for the trimming. Did people always have certain kinds of houses because of how much money they had, or because they were a certain kind of people? She had hardly ever noticed the houses their friends lived in. It occurred to her now that the hotel was the only brand-new house she had ever been inside of.

Mr. and Mrs. Deering, who were going to run it, were from Chicago and very friendly. They showed her the dining-room and even the kitchen. Immense. Alice recognized a lot of the servants; there probably wasn't a darky for miles around who wasn't going to try to work there this summer. There was still a great deal to do, Mrs. Deering told her, before they could have the formal opening.

Late one afternoon when she and Rose were coming up from the ravine, just as they got to the foot of the long flight of steps that was another one of the improvements, they saw a young man about to come down. He didn't try to pass them, but stood at the top and waited for them to pass him, whistling softly to himself. He was evidently a gentleman, though, not having on a hat, he couldn't take it off.





“Did you hear what he was whistling?” Rose asked her as they walked on.

“Yes; *Floradora*. ‘Tell me, pretty maiden –’ Alice hummed the words.

“He was doing it on purpose,” Rose said.

“On purpose for what?”

“To make you notice him.”

“But I had; I saw him there before we even started up. I have seen him several times before; he is one of the civil engineers that built the car line. His name is Mr. Clayton. Mrs. Deering is letting him stay at the hotel before it opens.”

“Just the same, I think you are too old for him to be acting like that,” Rose told her.

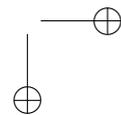
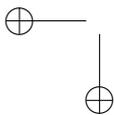


“‘Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair!’” This time Mr. Clayton was trying to make Rose notice him, but he had now been properly introduced. She was sitting on one of the gateposts and he was coming in at the gate. The reference was to her braids, which hung down below the flat top of the post. “Want to be helped down?” he asked her.

“No, thank you,” she said.

“Are the folks at home?”

“Mamma is. Alice went to town. I’m waiting for her now.”





“Mind if I sit on the other one?”

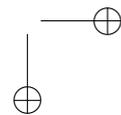
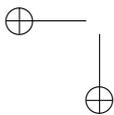
“Not at all,” Rose said politely.

“I think we look lovely,” he said, arranging his legs. “Almost as nice as peacocks. I can’t tell you what a disappointment it was to me when I came south not to find peacocks on the gateposts. I think we ought to sit here all we can.”

Rose didn’t laugh the way Alice would have done. Alice encouraged him to be foolish.

“You can see the hotel a lot better from up here,” he said. “That’s my room at the corner of the second floor. I believe if I had a rock I could hit the window. It’s one of the nicest rooms, but I’ll have to leave after the regular rates go on. I hear a car coming. Reckon your sister’s on it? Let’s fold our arms like statues and not speak to her.”

Staying at the hotel before it opened this way kept Mr. Clayton from seeming quite like a guest; he was more like a friend; they saw him all the time now. He amused them more than anybody they had ever known. Alice and her mother would sit up and laugh over the things he said, after he had gone. He was still young; the car line was the first important job he had had since he graduated. Cornell. Alice had never heard of Cornell; only of Harvard and Yale. Roddy was going to Vanderbilt.



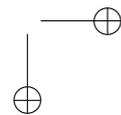
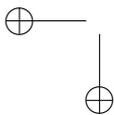


Mr. Clayton was out of a job now. He was waiting for more improvements to start somewhere. The South was waking up, he told Alice – or maybe just falling out of bed; anyhow he was going to stay around for a while. This gave him plenty of time to do what he wanted to, and they spent hours taking pictures with his camera and practicing target-shooting with his twenty-two.

“I believe you’ll be sorry when the hotel opens,” Rose told her. “Have you ever counted the pictures he’s taken with you in them? Suppose you had fallen off of that log just as he was taking you, and landed in the branch. On your head too.”

Alice laughed, but she did not like to suppose it. Even if she had not landed on her head she would have ruined miles of white ruffles. “Seems like you has twice as many clo’s in the wash as you used to.” Melvina had told her that just yesterday. But even if he did take pictures of her, Mr. Clayton had never said she was pretty. Rose thought she was getting too old for people to talk about her looks right to her face; except old friends of course; they would probably go on telling her she was not as pretty as her mother used to be, till the end of time.

“Do you think I’m getting better-looking as I go along, or worse?” she asked Rose; they were up in their bedroom combing their hair. Alice’s hair





was darker than Rose's, but it was not just light hair turning dark; it had its own store of gold that gleamed when the light fell on it, from anywhere; from sky or candle or even if anybody struck a match to light his cigar.

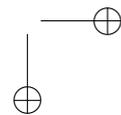
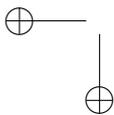
"Better," Rose said firmly.

"Of course I don't count my hair," Alice said. Neither of them counted their hair; they were tired of hearing about it.

"All the same it's more becoming to you with your plaits around your head the way you fix it now," Rose told her. "And you are not as fat as you used to be; not quite."

Alice studied her reflection in the glass. Maybe she was still too fat. Plump, people called it – the old friends. Her complexion was what counted, she supposed, and her eyes; she looked into them earnestly; she was not smiling; nobody had told her about her smile. Nor had anyone ever mentioned in her hearing the extraordinary softness of her voice, though every now and then somebody would ask her if she sang. She couldn't; not to amount to anything; Rose was the musician of the family.

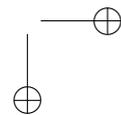
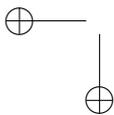
It was much later than Mr. Deering had intended when the hotel finally opened; one third of the season was about over, he said; but it was lighted up now in the evenings from end to end, with people strolling on the verandas or out on the





grounds, which were lighted too. The walk leading down to the steps and the ravine had lights at intervals, and the little kiosks and pergolas had them too. It was hard to remember how dark and dewy it used to be at night in the ravine.

Alice and Rose walked down pretty nearly every evening to see what was going on at the hotel; with their father and mother when they felt like going, or with Mr. Clayton, who always felt like it. He wasn't staying there any longer, though; he was boarding with Mrs. Giddings and her daughter, Miss Norma, about half a mile up the road. On Saturdays there was always music in the main parlor: piano, cornet, and violin. Mr. Heinman, who played the violin, was an old friend of theirs. He was one of their father's clients and once he had offered, in the line of business, to give Rose lessons on the violin. Rose was gifted, but they didn't think she was all that gifted. Sometimes when they were strolling by the window he would lean over and speak to the young man at the piano and they would play one of the things he knew Rose liked. Later on there would be regular dances, Mrs. Deering said, with canvas stretched over the carpets; but a few people danced now, on the verandas, when they could get Mr. Heinman to play a waltz. Alice and Rose practiced dancing the two-step with Mr. Clayton. He had asked them



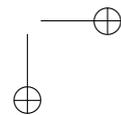
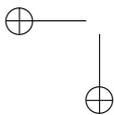


to call him Bert, but they couldn't remember to do it.

Boarding with Mrs. Giddings and Miss Norma was a terrible come-down after the hotel, but Mr. Clayton didn't seem to mind it. He always thought things were funny. He would tell them about what they had to eat, and about their conversations. Miss Norma was really a grass widow, but she called herself Miss because she wanted to forget the past. She told Mr. Clayton all about her past.

He must have told her things too. "He thinks you are the most beautiful creature God ever made," Miss Norma said the first time she came over to see them after Mr. Clayton commenced boarding there. She was looking at Alice when she said it, and her mother and Rose both looked at her too; they were wondering how she was going to take it. Of course it was not so bad coming from Miss Norma as if anybody else had said it, and naturally they all knew Mr. Clayton had never said anything like that in his life. Just trying to imagine him doing it made them laugh, after Miss Norma had gone home. But all the same he must have said something.

They were meeting more people all the time now. Miss Sallie Kent introduced them to all the nicest ones she knew, and Mrs. Deering kept bringing up strangers. "Everybody wants to know who the two





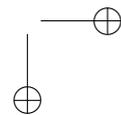
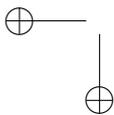
girls with the wonderful hair are,” Mrs. Deering said.

“How does that make you feel?” Rose said scornfully as they were going home.

“Did you ever think of cutting it off?” Mr. Clayton suggested. “Or you might team up with the Sutherland Sisters and get rich. If I don’t get another job pretty soon I’m going to have to do something on my looks. Grow a beard and be one of the Smith Brothers maybe. I know a girl who went to Vassar – that’s another college, Miss Alice – right in the same town with the Smith Brothers.”

“Do you suppose that’s the girl Miss Norma was talking about – the one who writes to him all the time?” Rose asked as they were getting ready for bed. “I wouldn’t be in the least surprised if she reads the letters – finding them lying around that way. It would be a great temptation to anybody as romantic as she is.”

When the regular dances began they were not a great success; not at first. Alice felt that having to keep her mind on the two-step was a great drawback. It was hot too, in spite of the electric fans. “I know a girl who could give you the hang of it in no time,” Mr. Clayton told her when they went out to cool off. “She’s wonderful at all the new steps.”





Alice thought about Vassar and the letters. She was sure Miss Norma must read parts of them anyway – especially if he left them lying outside of the envelope that way. Miss Norma said she “suspicioned” they were engaged. “And I believe she’s worried because he hasn’t come back up there this summer. She keeps asking him about his work. I don’t suppose they can get married till he gets another job.”

One of the things the landscape gardener had done was the beds of cannas and geraniums, lighted so that the colors were as bright as they were in the sunlight. “Want to walk down there toward the springs?” Mr. Clayton suggested.

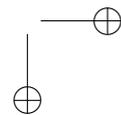
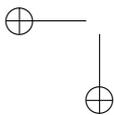
They went as far as the steps leading into the ravine and sat down on the top one. The music was lovely at a distance that way. They were playing *Floradora*. “That means the intermission,” Mr. Clayton said. “We must go in and get some ice cream.” But he didn’t move, and neither did she.

*“Tell me, pretty maiden,  
Are there any more at home like you?”*

he sang with the music, and Alice joined in:

*“There are a few, kind sir,  
A very very few.*

I love that,” she said.





“Did you know I’ve got another job?” he asked her.

“No – what?”

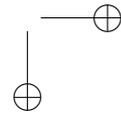
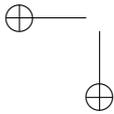
“The bridge for the new highway, east of here.”

“Aren’t you glad!” she exclaimed, thinking again about the girl.

“I really am,” he said. “It’s the best thing I’ve had; but it doesn’t start before fall. That will give me time to go home and see everybody.” He got up and held his hand down to her. “Come on before they eat it all up,” he said.

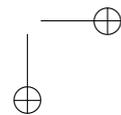
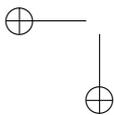


The summer was over all too soon. Alice could hardly believe it when she saw all the embellishments of the parlors coming down or up, as the case might be; it seemed such a little while since she had watched them going up, or down. Mr. and Mrs. Deering, closing where they had opened, pronounced the season a success in spite of the late start and talked expansively of another year. “Don’t you grow up and get married before next summer,” Mr. Deering said. “Mrs. Deering and I consider you one of our drawing cards, don’t we, Mrs. Deering?” Lapsing into private life did not make him address his wife less publicly. Alice didn’t know yet what Mrs. Deering’s name was,





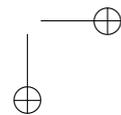
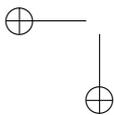
but she hated to see her go. She couldn't imagine the hotel with nobody in it, not even the servants, not even her. It was the first week in October; a beautiful day, and some bright leaves were blowing along the veranda where people used to dance. She imagined it in the rain, the doors and windows shut. It was so much sadder than it ought to be. Well, at any rate she would not have to come and look at it; there were plenty of things to do at home. She had hardly done any reading this summer, but now she would make up for lost time. Her father thought she could begin Vergil if she wanted to; he had time to help her so much more when it got dark early and they all had to be inside anyhow. Rose had already gone back to her music. The new highway had not started yet and nobody seemed to know just when it would. Mr. Clayton didn't mention it in his letter, but that had come soon after he went away. He talked about coming back, though; he sounded almost homesick – more than Roddy ever had. They had hardly seen Roddy all summer; he was off camping in the mountains with some of his Vanderbilt friends. Mr. Clayton had never once mentioned wanting to be in a cooler place. "Tell your mother I will never forget all the nice things she did for me, but what I really want to do instead of thanking her is to come back and make her do them all over again."





They thought his letter was lovely; he didn't seem to have forgotten anything. "Do you remember the day Thor found the hen's nest and brought me the eggs one by one in his mouth without breaking them, and your mother had Annie Sue make me a special cake with them?" Thor was their dog – a sort of mastiff; he simply didn't know what to do with himself without Roddy and had just about adopted Mr. Clayton; and now he was lonesome all over again.

The weather went on being beautiful for weeks after the hotel closed – too beautiful to stay in and read. The trouble was to find someone to stay out with, now that Rose couldn't be pulled away from the piano. There was Thor, of course, and twice lately there had been Miss Norma. She had come over the first time to see if they had heard anything from Mr. Clayton, and Alice had walked home with her. Mr. Clayton hadn't even taken all his things, Miss Norma said. She showed Alice his books still on the table and some maps pinned on the wall with thumb tacks. The house she and her mother lived in was small and they were both rather large, which made it seem a little full, what with the conversation. Mrs. Giddings was old of course, and Miss Norma wasn't at all young; they really looked a good deal alike, but they couldn't both





talk all the time, so Mrs. Giddings occasionally stopped.

When Alice told her mother about the books and the maps, she thought it was very inconsiderate of Mr. Clayton to do that. “Naturally they want to know about their room,” Mrs. Macgowan said; “he ought to have notified them before this.”

“How much do you suppose she really knows about the girl, Mamma?” Alice asked. “Do you believe she read her letters?”

“Very likely; some of them; but there is no telling what construction she put on them.”

“She seems to think he wants to come back and the girl won’t let him. She asked me, walking over, if I believed in fate. She seems to think he likes me better than he does her.”

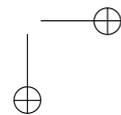
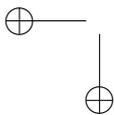
“Do you think so?”

Alice shook her head. “Not without saying something about it – could he?”

“No, I suppose not,” her mother said.

It was only a few days after this that the wedding invitation came. Her name was Paula Wadsworth Brooks. Miss Norma had thought it was Polly. “Do you think we ought to tell her right away, on account of the room?” Alice asked.

Mrs. Macgowan thought it would not hurt to wait a few days, and it was no more than that before Miss Norma came for her second visit, pre-





pared to do the telling herself. They were both coming, she announced; immediately after the wedding.



The only serious problem that confronted him, Mr. Clayton said when they came over to supper, was what to do about Paula's trunks. He didn't think an engineer had any business monkeying with cubic space; either Paula or the trunks would have to give ground.

"Isn't there any kind of an attic - a loft maybe?" Mrs. Macgowan asked him.

"Whatever there is, you have to climb a ladder to get to it," Mr. Clayton said. "Can your trunks climb a ladder, Paula?"

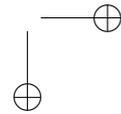
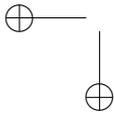
"I'll tell you what you can do," Rose said. "You can take out all the things you want to use right away and put them in one trunk, and then bring the others over here. How many of them are there?"

"Ask her how big they are," Mr. Clayton said.

"I've forgotten," Paula said. "I've forgotten everything about them. This is the most heavenly chicken I ever ate in my life."

"I've been telling you," Mr. Clayton said.

"Why haven't you been telling Mrs. Giddings and Miss Norma?" Paula asked him. "But, really,





they are awfully nice,” she said, turning to Mrs. Macgowan. “They are both of them just as kind as they can be.”

“And entertaining,” Mr. Clayton said. “I told you about that too. I told you you wouldn’t have a lonesome minute.”

Paula laughed. “I was packing some books to bring when he told me that,” she explained. “I knew I would have to be by myself so much – at least I thought I would.”

“Imagine books, with Miss Norma’s past lying around,” Mr. Clayton said.

“I trust Mrs. Clayton shares your taste for melodrama,” Mr. Macgowan said.

“I am wondering about that,” Paula said. “Just where was her past? Surely all those things didn’t happen here?”

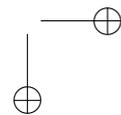
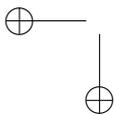
“They happened before we knew her; in Kentucky, I believe,” Mrs. Macgowan said; “but I expect they have grown a good deal with the years.”

“She showed me the scar on her neck,” Paula said. “She really is dramatic: ‘Look – stabbed!’ It sounded like Mrs. Siddons.”

“How did she happen to?” Alice asked. “Was she talking about the man she married?”

“That’s a natural question,” Mr. Clayton said.

“She must have been thinking about him,” Paula said. “She was sitting in the rocking-chair watching





me while I did a few things to the room; they really have fixed it up for us – pink curtains and a beautiful crocheted bedspread; I was putting some photographs around and she was telling me about the happy memories I awakened. Then all of a sudden she snatched off her lace collar and came out with that. I didn't know what to say; I don't know now."

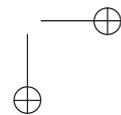
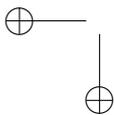
"Well, at any rate, you can't say she hasn't warned you," Mr. Clayton said. "All is not beer that skittles, is Miss Norma's motto."

Being married hadn't made the least bit of difference in Mr. Clayton. He was just as funny as ever, and Paula had turned out to be nicer than they had even hoped. They didn't think she was pretty so much as very stylish. She had the loveliest clothes!

"I like the dress she had on this time better than any I have seen her wear yet," Rose said after they had gone home. "Don't you love the way the skirt sweeps out and touches the floor behind her? Not a train exactly –"

"It's a bell skirt," Alice told her. "You are not supposed to hold it up, even out of doors; you just don't pay any attention to it; she didn't."

"Poor child!" Mrs. Macgowan said. "Think of bringing all her lovely things down here to spend





the winter with Mrs. Giddings and Miss Norma! Why didn't he tell her?"

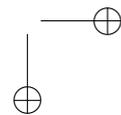
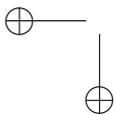
They could all see that she was determined to make the best of it, however, and that made them like her more than ever. "We have simply got to manage something about her trunks," Mrs. Macgowan said. "That gay bridegroom seems to have put them off his mind completely. I believe Rose's suggestion is about as good as anything; there is plenty of room for them upstairs."

"I expect the gay bridegroom is pretty busy," Mr. Macgowan said. "They are trying to rush the work while this good weather lasts."

At least nothing had to be arranged about the weather; the soft bright days admitted of no improvement. They were ideal for any honeymoon and particularly so for one that was being spent with Mrs. Giddings and Miss Norma, because of the escape they afforded. "I simply don't know what I would do if we had a rainy spell," Paula said on the first cloudy day. "There is nowhere I could go, to keep from being talked to."

"You will just have to put on your waterproof and overshoes and come over here," Mrs. Macgowan said. "Then if we talk to you, you can go upstairs and visit your trunks."

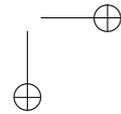
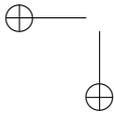
"Well, I'm going up there now, if I may, to get out some pictures I want to show Alice."

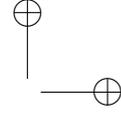




Paula had been talking about Vassar. It seemed to Alice that all the important things that had ever happened to Paula had been at college and not at home. A lot of them were interesting, but somehow they all sounded far away. They belonged to a world she had never thought of entering – that she had literally never thought of at all. Just the opposite of Europe; Alice could not remember a time when she had not dreamed of going to Europe. Her father had been once, before he was married, and Colonel Bodley had been twice. She loved to hear them talk about it and remind each other of the things they never would forget. “And at seven fifteen we took the diligence and stopped for lunch when we got to Brigue. I shall never forget the view as we started down the Simplon...”

Her father had liked Italy better than any other country. Practically all the things he brought back with him came from there. He hadn't had very much money and he was going to get married when he came home, so he couldn't buy many souvenirs, but he had his miniature painted in Rome to give her mother, and had himself a watch-chain made out of her hair, with beautiful gold mountings. Alice had often admired these purchases when her mother opened the strongbox to which they had now been retired; but by far the most important thing her father had brought back was still in





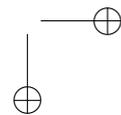
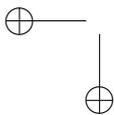
active use – the megalethoscope in the library. She and Rose and even Roddy liked to look through it as much now as they ever did. One of them would sit down in front of it with a square of black broadcloth over his head to do the looking, while the others changed the views; all the most famous things in Europe, especially Rome.

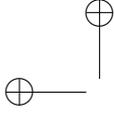
*Dost thou flow, old Tiber, through  
a marble wilderness?*

Alice always felt like Byron when she looked at the Forum and the Arch of Constantine and things like that.

Turning the pages of her college album, Paula may have felt like Byron too. Certainly the contrast between those vanished scenes and most of her present ones would have been more useful to a poet than to her. She got up rather suddenly and laid the album on the table. “I’ll leave it here if you’d like to look at it,” she said. “I must be going home – if you can call it that. Bert may be getting off a little earlier – ‘seeing it’s Saturday,’ as Miss Norma says.”

“I don’t see how she stands it,” Mrs. Macgowan said, watching the young figure in the pretty dress go off under the trees. “And she isn’t looking as well as she did – not so bright. I’m glad you reminded me to ask them to dinner tomorrow.”





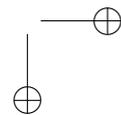
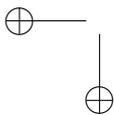
But they had hardly finished tomorrow's breakfast, which was late because it was Sunday, when Mr. Clayton came over to tell them Paula was under the weather and thought she had better stay in bed. He had left her there and must hurry back, he said.

"Could you wait just a minute while I fix some of the tipsy parson we were going to have for dessert, to send her?" Mrs. Macgowan said, hurrying out to fix it.

They were all laughing at something when she came back with her little dish, so she put it on the table by Mr. Clayton's hat while they went on laughing at something else. It was considerably later in the forenoon before he picked up the hat and saw the dish and picked it up too and departed. "I don't see how she stands it," Mrs. Macgowan said again.

"She didn't eat the tipsy parson; Mr. Clayton ate it," Rose reported the next day when she and Alice had been over to see how Paula was. "But she thought you were an angel just the same."

"I don't see how she can eat anything, shut up in that room with a coal-oil stove," Alice said. "It's a good thing her nose is stopped up, and I expect she wishes her ears were too. She says Miss Norma comes in, or else pokes her head in, every five





minutes to ask her if she wants anything. I believe you ought to go over and see her, Mamma.”

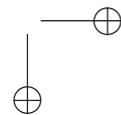
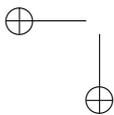
“And ask her if she wants anything? Sometimes the only thing people want is to be let alone,” Mrs. Macgowan said. But when as a matter of course she did go, she realized that Paula would have to be arranged for just as the trunks had been. “You will have to come over and stay with us until you get well,” she said. “Does the doctor say it’s a cold?”

“He says it might be malaria too,” Paula said. “I suppose you just naturally have it until you get used to the climate. It isn’t anything very bad, is it?”

“It can be, but we won’t let it. It’s a little late for it now – December.” Mrs. Macgowan was thinking of possibilities even more natural than malaria. Poor child!



The afternoon sun came in at the western window of Paula’s room and a wood fire burned softly in the red brick chimney. It was a big upstairs room, as unlike the one she had at Mrs. Giddings’s and Miss Norma’s as it could possibly be, but she had been there long enough now to take its aspect for granted. The doctor had been right about





its being malaria, but she had been wrong about malaria not being bad. Still, she was on the mend, as Miss Norma said Miss Norma had been over again only that morning to tell her how glad they would be to have her back. When she was mended – Paula had been wondering when that would be.

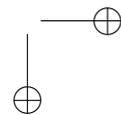
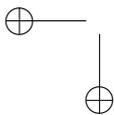
“When do you think I ought to go?” she asked Mrs. Macgowan, who was keeping her company while she sat propped up against her pillows and drank her tea. “Do you think next week? I am better every day now.”

“I am sure you are; but let’s wait at least until you get downstairs and into the yard a little, before we talk about your going farther.”

“But I have been here so long,” Paula said. “You have all been perfect angels, but I can’t just stay on and on like this.”

“Not even when we love to have you? You know we do – though of course we would rather have you well.” The western window had been raised a little and voices had been coming in with the sunshine; laughter too; and now there came singing. Mrs. Macgowan went over and looked out. “They are building something down there,” she said. She closed the window and came back.

“The trouble is –” Paula began, pushing away her cup and saucer and leaning back with her eyes on Mrs. Macgowan’s face – “I have had so

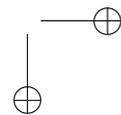
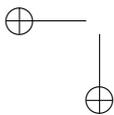




much time to think, lying here all this while; I don't seem to be getting anywhere with my life. I can see how wrong it was for me to hate it so – being at Mrs. Giddings's and Miss Norma's – when I had made up my mind to like everything – because I liked Bert so much. I thought I could make a home for him on a desert island, and I couldn't even do it there. And another reason –” She stopped, but even with the window closed they could hear the voices – “another reason is Alice. It isn't because of what Miss Norma told me – about last summer; though of course I knew there was something keeping him down here; but you can see it yourself. She is so terribly pretty; sometimes when she comes in with her cheeks like that, I feel as if I can hardly stand it – her looking like that, and being so happy all the time, and laughing at everything. There are so many times when I just don't feel like laughing.” Paula reached under the pillow for her handkerchief.

“Of course you don't,” Mrs. Macgowan said. “Nobody does when they have really grown up; but I have often noticed that men, some men, take longer to grow up than women do. That is often their greatest charm for us, don't you think it is?”

Paula took down the handkerchief to look at her. “And Bert is a year younger than I am,” she said. “Did you know that? How you must despise





me for being so nasty and jealous when you have all been so sweet to me – and knowing all the time that it wasn't anybody's fault –"

"And hasn't done anybody any harm," Mrs. Macgowan said. "It's just one of those problems we can't handle when we are feeling low. Malaria makes you feel lower than almost anything."

"And of course I know what a sight I am," Paula said – as yellow as a pumpkin!"

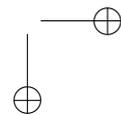
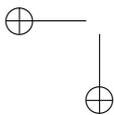
"Not any longer. You are beginning to look lovely again, in all your lace and ribbons. And do you realize it's less than two weeks to Christmas? Roddy will be here then. You have no idea what a difference that makes in this old house."

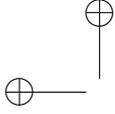
"I don't want it to be different. It's the loveliest house in the world," Paula said.

"We were building an igloo," Alice told her mother – "like they have in Alaska. Mr. Clayton said it would be a lot warmer for Thor to sleep in than his kennel."

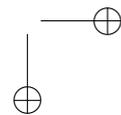
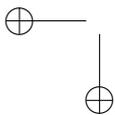
"But he ought to have been upstairs, Alice, amusing Paula, instead of out there amusing you and Rose."

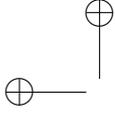
"Rose wasn't out there," Alice said. "Couldn't you hear the piano? She was practicing her fugue. Mr. Clayton said it sounded exactly like a song he learned out west called Leather Breeches. He was singing it with the fugue, and it really does go."





“Well, all the same, he ought to have been upstairs, and if he says anything about finishing the igloo, you can tell him Thor doesn’t like it – tell him something; or maybe you had better just not be around when he comes home early. I am afraid we have all been inconsiderate about keeping him downstairs and laughing at the things he says, when Paula doesn’t feel like laughing. Naturally he likes to be appreciated –” Mrs. Macgowan stopped. Alice was looking thoughtful. They were both wondering how they were going to go about not appreciating Mr. Clayton.

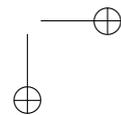
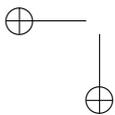




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As usual, the long stretch of the winter did not begin until after Christmas, and it ended, also as usual, in hopes deferred. The January jasmine bloomed and froze repeatedly and the burning bush was quenched under a February snow. The only reliable promise lay in the lengthening afternoons. Alice noticed the difference on every sunny day; not by the clock, but by all sorts of things: the glass and silver winking in a long strip of sunlight on the supper table, and not having to light the lamp on the bureau to fix her hair. And this year she noticed it particularly coming out from town on the street car. She seldom went to town, but she had gone oftener this winter because the cars were so convenient – especially for the Christmas shopping. It had been the nicest Christmas she could remember, with Roddy at home and Paula

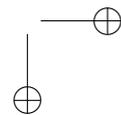
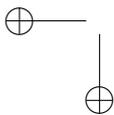
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well again and everything so gay. The Claytons had stayed on through the holidays, and they had danced in the evenings and had all sorts of fun with them. They were back at Mrs. Giddings's and Miss Norma's now, and the bridge was almost finished.

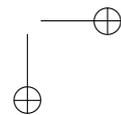
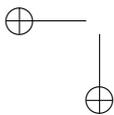
The trip to town took exactly an hour and Alice always tried to remember to bring along a book to read. There wasn't any scenery; not even many houses; it was just plain country all the way. And now in the winter, with the hotel closed, there were very few passengers. Sometimes there would be only the conductor and the motorman. One of the conductors was a boy they knew, Alonzo Hill, who lived up the road about a mile from them. He was really an adopted son; Mrs. Hill had adopted him when he was little, and in the summer he helped her with her farm, but in the winter of course he could do something else. Alonzo said he would a lot rather conduct a plow than a street car. "I wouldn't be surprised if this is the last nickel you'll be giving me before next winter"; he told Alice when he took her fare one February afternoon. "You won't see me in these clothes again after next week." He sat down on the vacant seat in front of her, prepared to be entertaining until the next stop.

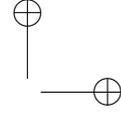
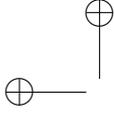




Alice started to ask him if he wasn't sorry; he looked so much nicer in his conductor's uniform than he did in his own Sunday clothes, but she decided not to let him think she noticed how he looked. Miss Norma had told them how conceited he was; everybody thought he was so handsome. Mrs. Hill had adopted him in the first place because he was such a beautiful little boy with curly hair, Miss Norma said. His father was supposed to be Spanish. So Alice asked him instead if they were going to plant a big garden this year and sell vegetables to the hotel as they had done the year before. That started Alonzo off and she had to try to look interested while he raised his voice above the rocking of the car and outlined a plan he had for a truck garden that would supply the hotel with everything they needed. Nobody had ever said he was lazy.

The only other passenger on the car was a gentleman she had never seen before. He must have ridden out from town and was now riding back, for he was evidently not from anywhere out in the country. Alice thought Alonzo was maybe trying to impress him with his knowledge of agriculture; and he did seem to be interested. He kept looking over at them and smiling. Then, when they got nearer to town and more people began getting on and Alonzo couldn't sit there any more, the gentle-





man came over and took his place. "Our conductor seems to be quite a farmer," he said pleasantly, and Alice smiled. "Friend of yours?" he asked her.

She started to say yes, but – just what exactly did he mean?

"Nice country for farming," he went on, looking out. "First time I've ever been down here." Alice decided he hadn't meant anything.

"A man I know in Chicago – T. H. Deering – you know him? I thought you would, if you live out there where you got on –"

Alice, her smile restored, told him she knew Mr. and Mrs. Deering both. "Our house is the one – did you get off the car?"

He shook his head. "I only rode out to the end of the line. I'm down here on business and happened to have the afternoon on my hands, and that was the only place I'd heard much about – the hotel out there and the springs. Pretty place; must be dull right now though, with everything closed. Do you come to town very often?"

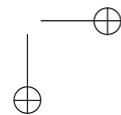
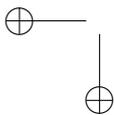
"Not very," she said.

"Sort of tiresome trip, isn't it?"

"I don't mind it. I generally bring a book to read."

"Ever spend the night in town?"

It was right at this point that – whatever it was – began to happen. Either his voice had changed

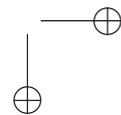
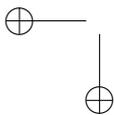




– dropped a little – or maybe she hadn’t really looked at him before; but she knew now that he had no business to be talking to her – asking her things. She looked out to see just where they were – how long it would be before Main Street; she even looked around for Alonzo; but in all those directions she must have looked different from the way she felt, for his voice went on. “Why couldn’t you come to dinner with me? They tell me the Gayoso is one of the best hotels in the South. Then afterwards I could get a nice team and drive you home a whole lot quicker than the car –”

He must have said that, for she couldn’t have made it up, and yet she could never be sure she had actually heard the words. The car was only at Second Street, but she was getting off; she could walk up to Main –

What she did was nearer running, and she knew how red her cheeks must be by the way they felt, and the way people looked at her. So this was it, she kept thinking, even after she was inside of the store and was matching her mother’s samples and buying the things she had come for. This was the nameless evil that she had read about – that really made the books so interesting. She had always known, or at least she had been led to believe or to imagine, that something of this nature was abroad in the land seeking what it might devour, but





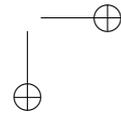
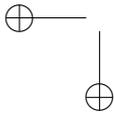
having never met it in any shape or form before, it had not occurred to her to ask anybody – her mother, or even herself – why it was so greatly to be feared. She asked it now. Suppose he did invite her to dinner and offer to drive her home? All she had to do was to decline. Yet here she was, scared to death, her knees fairly shaking under her at the ribbon counter.

“He ought to have been put off the car!” her mother said emphatically when Alice told her. She had waited until Rose went to bed, and that was funny too. Why didn’t she want to tell it before Rose? They had better not tell her father either, Mrs. Macgowan said. He wouldn’t want her to go in town by herself.

“But why?” Alice asked her. “There wasn’t anything he could do, with people all around like that – unless I was a perfect idiot, and then I wouldn’t be allowed to go by myself anyhow.”

“Well, just forget about it,” her mother said. “Don’t tell anybody.”

There was a screw loose somewhere in all of this, Alice decided. The world was supposed to be full of conflicts between innocence and villainy; and certainly the books were. The unsuspecting girl and the designing adventurer – their meeting was the great adventure. And now that it had happened to her, she felt more discouraged than





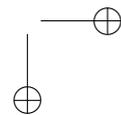
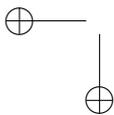
she had ever felt over anything. And her mother didn't even want her to tell her father, and she didn't want to tell Rose.

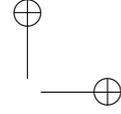
She didn't look forward to having the hotel open nearly so much after that, and it made her realize how much she had been looking forward to it all winter. She had wondered about the people she would meet; whether the same ones would come back and if there would be many new ones. She had danced the two-step a lot while Roddy was at home; he was just as good as Mr. Clayton or better, and she had got so she liked it better than the old-fashioned waltz. The dances at the hotel were another thing she had been looking forward to. Would Mrs. Deering be apt to introduce her to a man like that, she wondered.

The bridge was about finished now. The Claytons would be gone before the hotel opened. There were a lot of things to keep this summer from being as nice as the last one.

"Did you know Miss Norma has applied for the position of housekeeper?" Paula asked them one day when they had been talking about impending changes. "At the hotel, I mean."

"Where else could you mean?" Mrs. Macgowan smiled. "I am beginning to wonder how anybody out here ever got along before. Melvina has already told me she won't be able to help Annie Sue with





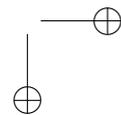
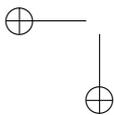
the washing any more, 'come summer,' because she is going to be 'one of the laundries' at the hotel. I am even counting on taking in a little butter-and-egg money myself."

"And don't forget Alonzo Hill," Alice said, and wished immediately that she had not remembered him. He was a part of that trip to town. She had not gone in since without being glad Alonzo would not be on the car and maybe let her see that he had noticed something. Forget about it, her mother had said, but so many things kept reminding her.

"Miss Norma ought to like her job, if she gets it," Paula said. "She takes such a burning interest in romance, and a summer hotel is supposed to be a wonderful field for that sort of research."

Alice seemed to be the only one with nothing special to look forward to.

But the spring itself is always special, and darkies with rakes cleaning off the canna beds and burning leaves in the ravine promised something she had never known to fail. Every day now she saw some new preparation going on for a world with which she knew by experience that all was always well. Even if nothing happened – if no people came – she had never been unhappy without them. Was that what she was expecting to get out of the hotel – some new kind of happiness?

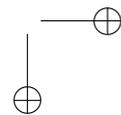
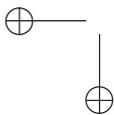


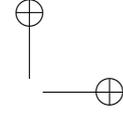


“This year we are catering specially to the Delta clientele,” Mr. Deering said. “That’s why we had to open from two to three weeks earlier. Those planters like to get their wives and children settled for the summer before it gets hot and mosquiterly down there. They won’t anywhere near fill us up, of course, but they will stay longer than the people from the more temperate belts; they will be a relatively permanent element.” He was talking to Miss Norma in the professional capacity that was now hers. Rooms were being got ready for Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Dupree and family, from Feliciana Parish, Louisiana.

“And then if Mr. Dupree only stays over Sunday,” Miss Norma took up where she had left off, “she probably won’t want the extra room. She’ll more than likely want to take one or two of the children in with her, wouldn’t you imagine?”

Mr. Deering made his gesture of leaving all such details in her hands. Three rooms had been reserved for Mr. and Mrs. Dupree and the children, with outside accommodations for the nurse. It occurred to Miss Norma that they might be filled up before they knew it, if all the planters had families like that. She was not only liking her job, she was being good at it. “You’ll find I can still





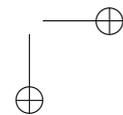
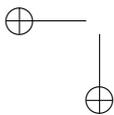
turn as quick as a girl," she had stated confidently upon arrival, and certainly no girl could have been expected to keep her head "over Sunday," when the gentlemen came, the way Miss Norma kept hers.

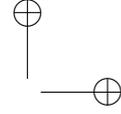
"There's only one thing," she told Mrs. Macgowan on an afternoon when she had run up for a breathing-spell, as she called such opportunities of exhaustive sociability: "I'm going to get me some shoes with lower heels, and a different corset, before the weather gets really hot."

"I would, if I were you," Mrs. Macgowan said sympathetically. She and Alice and Rose all glanced, briefly and politely at the feet and the figure that were supposed to have won Miss Norma so much admiration – if not the scar on her neck – back in that past of hers. The number-three C's and the hourglass waist, though no longer that, were still, it seemed to them, much less than the rest of her required.

"Mrs. Dupree wears the La Vida Longhip," Miss Norma told them. "That's the most expensive corset you can buy. I saw it lying on her bed. And she has certainly kept her shape, in spite of —" she remembered about Alice and Rose and said: "everything."

"And aren't they lovely children?" Mrs. Macgowan said. "The nurse was up here yesterday





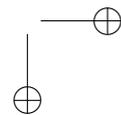
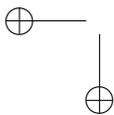
with the two littlest ones and it seemed to me I never saw prettier babies in my life.”

“They say she’s always been considered a beauty herself, down where she lives,” Miss Norma said. I never cared so much for that big-eyed, washed-outlooking type; but the children do look like her. And do you know, inside of the first week that baby would turn right around in his nurse’s arms and try to come to me? Just give me time and I can take any child away from its own mother.”

Time in Miss Norma’s case was certainly lacking, but Mrs. Macgowan did not think she would meet with much resistance where Mrs. Dupree was concerned. Her generosity with her offspring had been the subject of considerable comment. “They run around the hotel like little puppies,” Colonel Bodley had remarked.

“Have you seen Alonzo Hill’s new turnout?” Miss Norma asked them as she got up to go. “It’s their same horse, but he has bought a brand-new buckboard to bring his things to the hotel in. We’ve been getting most of our strawberries from him. I’ll tell him to drive up here some day and let you all see it.”

She must have told him the very next morning. Alice, coming out of the garden, saw it standing in front of the steps, resplendent in the sunlight; and on the seat beside Alonzo were two boxes of



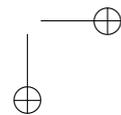
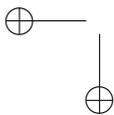


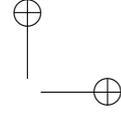
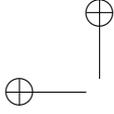
strawberries he was bringing them, and two of the Dupree children. "You all just sit there," he told them, getting out and coming to meet her with the strawberries.

"How beautiful!" Alice exclaimed, taking the strawberries and extending her admiration to include the buckboard, from which the two little girls had immediately descended. They were approximately five and six years old, and they were beautiful too.

"They always want me to ride them, but I'm afraid they're going to get hurt, scrambling in and out so much," Alonzo said, putting them back on the seat and preparing to get in himself in order to keep them there. Alice wanted to call her mother and Rose, but he wouldn't let her; he must be getting back, he said. "But I'm mighty glad you like it. Tell your mother I'll be driving up again."

"Wouldn't it be wonderful," Mrs. Macgowan said that evening at supper, "if Alonzo did turn out to be all the things poor old Mr. Hill never was, and could make enough money to lift the load off of poor Mrs. Hill's shoulders? Adopting a child is a terrible risk, but when it does turn out right, there always seems to be something providential about it. Nobody expects to be rewarded for what they do for their own children, but an adopted child is bread upon the waters." They were having the





strawberries with cream for dessert. They were a new variety – the Sharpless – and fine enough to make them feel optimistic not only about Alonzo but about agriculture in general.

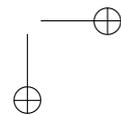
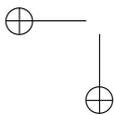
“I wish you had seen him,” Alice said. “He must feel that he has to dress up to go with the buckboard; or maybe to go with the hotel. Anyhow he certainly looked prosperous.”

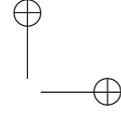
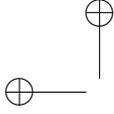
“I must go and see Mrs. Hill,” Mrs. Macgowan said. “I haven’t been for a long time, and I have hardly ever seen her when she was not in trouble of some kind. I would love to hear her quote the Bible over something pleasant at last – poor thing!”

“A good deal of it was written with that intention, I believe,” Mr. Macgowan said.

“Do you suppose the house would ever look cheerful, even if they did have some money?” Rose asked.

“It’s those cedar trees,” her mother said. “She doesn’t realize how big they have been growing all these years; people never do. And of course nothing else will grow in all that shade. The parlor is terribly dark; it’s a sad place anyhow; I always try to get out into the garden, or at least out on the porch, as soon as I can. This time I will tell her I came to see the strawberries. I know she will want to give us some plants in the fall.”



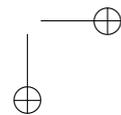
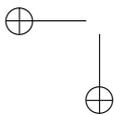


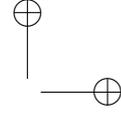
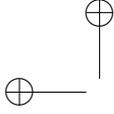
The strawberry season, always too brief, was over before she made her visit, but she still managed to make it out of doors. She saw Mrs. Hill's sunbonnet around the corner of the porch and intercepted her approach to the front steps. "Let's don't go inside," she said. "What is it smells so sweet – honeysuckle?"

Mrs. Hill, also inhaling, confessed she found it difficult to distinguish one fragrance from another at this redolent season. She had taken the sunbonnet off and held it by the strings as she led the way toward the flower garden, from which the odors emanated. She was a tall woman, and the skirt of her gray gingham dress, which swept the grass as she walked, had the dignity a great deal of starch confers. Her language was like that too, Mrs. Macgowan reflected, walking beside her and listening to what she had done about the perennial phlox and the polyanthus roses; it was a symbol of something.

"I want to see Alonzo's vegetables too," she said when they had gone down the garden walk and back and she was again being conducted toward the house. "I hear he has the earliest of everything this year, and those Sharpless strawberries are almost too beautiful to eat."

"But I must not deprive him of the pleasure of showing them to you," Mrs. Hill said. "I am





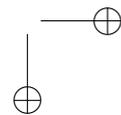
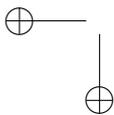
expecting him at any moment. He went to the hotel again this afternoon, contrary to his usual custom, because they needed an extra supply of squash and onions. I believe I hear him now," she added, turning toward the gate.

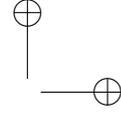
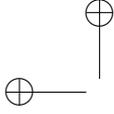
Mrs. Macgowan turned too, in time to see the buckboard approaching at a pace more suggestive of the turf than the delivery of squash and onions. A lady in a white dress was sitting beside Alonzo, holding a little girl on her lap; another little girl was standing between them on the floor of the buckboard, leaning against their knees. It was not the first time she had seen Mrs. Dupree, but she never did find out, she said when she got home, whether Mrs. Hill had seen her before or not.

"It's hard to tell with anybody as formal as she is whether people are friends or strangers," Mrs. Macgowan said. "It's quite possible that she takes the children out there just the way she brings them here; but she can walk up here, and out there Alonzo must have to take her. Of course this time I brought her back."

"What is she like – I mean to talk to?" Alice asked. "Every time I have seen her she has been with somebody."

"She hardly talked at all," Mrs. Macgowan said. "I would have thought maybe she was embarrassed, only I knew she wasn't. I can see how she would be





considered a beauty, though – the way she looks up at you from under that hat. One of these brainless beauties I imagine.”



Mr. Mason took the vacant chair beside Miss Sallie Kent on the hotel veranda and asked her to tell him who the two girls were. “I saw you walking up from the springs together; I hoped you would bring them in,” he said.

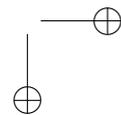
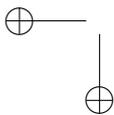
“I will next time. They are your nearest neighbors,” Miss Sallie told him. “The hotel grounds, there to the left, go right up to their fence; the house is back quite a way, though. Their names are Alice and Rose Macgowan.”

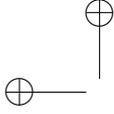
“I expected you to say Saint Cecilia and Marguerite; in the popular version you always see them wearing their hair like that.”

“Which do you think is the prettier?”

“Saint Cecilia, so far.”

This was not the first time Mr. Mason had sought information from Miss Kent as to his surroundings, which were new to him; he had been there only three days; nor was it the first time he had seen Alice and Rose Macgowan. He might tell Miss Kent about that – he would like to tell somebody – but first there were a few things he wanted her to tell him.

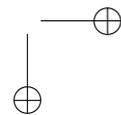
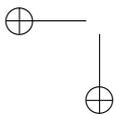


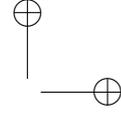
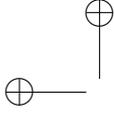


“Seventeen,” he said meditatively, after she had complied. “What does one do at seventeen if one doesn’t go to school?”

Miss Sallie laughed. “I think I will let her answer that,” she said; “or you can wait and see.”

He decided not to tell Miss Kent, at least not on this occasion, about one thing he had already seen her doing – the first morning after he came. He had been walking along a road, a dirt road – a strange road, as all the roads around here naturally were – when he heard the sound of blows proceeding from the wood he was just then passing; like somebody beating a rug, only a rug did not utter piercing squeals. He had been raised in the country and knew a pig when he heard one. What he saw, after a leap or two through the underbrush, was a scene from Mother Goose – “Stick, stick, beat dog, make dog bite pig.” The effort in this case however was to make dog stop; it was a large dog and the two girls who were endeavoring beyond their strength to effect the separation had so far not succeeded. One of them – Marguerite – held the dog by the collar while the other one – Saint Cecilia – wielded the stick. “You brute – you beast – you old devil!” she was saying in a voice of arresting sweetness between her sobs as he arrived. Her cheeks were flaming. Marguerite was white but calm.





“Twist his collar,” he told her. “Here, let me do it. Better let me hold on to him,” he advised them further, when it was over and the pig, still squealing, was headed for home. “I won’t have to choke him any more.”

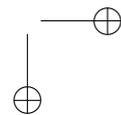
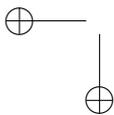
“It’s Jobey Duncan’s pig. One of us will have to go and tell him.”

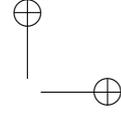
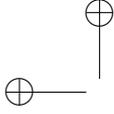
“The pig will tell him. He isn’t badly hurt – he couldn’t squeal that way.”

“But look at the blood on Thor’s mouth!”

In the end he had been the one to go to Jobey Duncan’s, while they started off in the other direction, holding Thor, bloody but unbowed, by the collar between them. He had wondered when he would see them again. He was planning to spend as much of the summer at the hotel as he could manage, with an office in town. So they were neighbors.

When a man has been brought up in the country and has never had any other idea than to go back and live in it again whenever he could make it possible to do so, his connection with the city, even if he has to live there in the meanwhile, is apt to seem more of an accident than a way of life. Finding himself in this particular city, and in the summer of all seasons, had impressed Mr. Mason as being something worse than an accident, though it was really in the line of promotion in



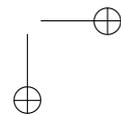
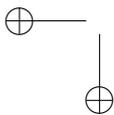


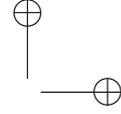
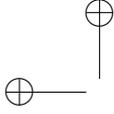
the cotton business, and, coming from Charleston, he had no right to complain of the heat. Finding the springs, however, and the hotel veranda, was more in line with intention; he wondered that so few others seemed to have found them – wondered and thanked God.

He thanked Miss Norma too, when he met her in the hall, for giving him a room more to his liking, one overlooking the ravine. “I knew if I was going to change you I’d better do it before Saturday,” she told him. “We’re always pretty full over Sunday. I’m sure you’re going to enjoy the dance.”

So they had dances. Did the neighbors come, he wondered.

Alice came, in a new white dress barely finished in time for the occasion. She and her mother and Rose had all sewed on it up to the last minute, and Annie Sue had to press it after supper. “You are a perfect vision!” her mother said when they got her dressed – which was what she always did say about anything new, but Alice could see herself that it was becoming to her figure. She didn’t have to worry about her face, but she did want to look slim. It had a bell skirt and she was very careful to let it go the minute she got in sight of the lighted veranda, though naturally she had had to hold it up off of the wet grass, walking down

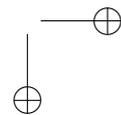
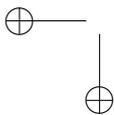


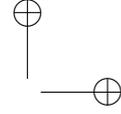


with her father. Nobody had to stay with her, now that Miss Sallie Kent was there.

This was the first one of the regular dances, and Alice was surprised to see how many of the people she knew already. There were lots of new ones too; she was being introduced to somebody all the time, which meant of course that she was dancing most of the time and couldn't see very much of what the others were doing. She would have loved to look on a little more. Mr. Dupree had come up for the dance and brought a friend of theirs, a man that Mrs. Dupree said was the best dancer in New Orleans, and it really was beautiful to watch them dance together. "They remind me of two leaves blowing along the floor," Miss Sallie Kent said. Mrs. Dupree didn't ever look up while she was dancing; she held her head down until the top of it was all you could see – as if she were buried in the music.

Anybody Miss Sallie introduced to her was sure to be all right, her mother said – to walk around with too, at least on the veranda. Mr. Mason had waited to be introduced before he spoke to her; he even asked her to dance exactly as if he had never seen her before; Miss Sallie thought he never had. Alice was beginning to wonder about it herself, for naturally she must have looked entirely different that day from the way she looked now; but when



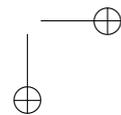
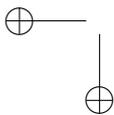


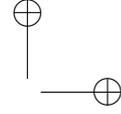
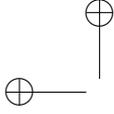
they were walking on the veranda, all at once he turned to her and said: "How is Thor behaving?" – as if that was what they had been talking about all the time. The pig was getting along all right, he told her. He had been back to see.

Alice couldn't make out, the next time Miss Norma came up for a breathing-spell, just what had happened after the dance – on Sunday morning it must have been. Either Miss Norma didn't know very much about it herself or else she thought she ought not to tell too much before her and Rose, but there had been some kind of a fuss and the Duprees' friend had suddenly gone. "He was supposed to stay till Monday," Miss Norma said, "but something made him change his mind. I reckon one of these stocky, heavy-set men like Jerry Dupree just naturally can't stand to have his wife dance all night that way with somebody else."

Shades of Miss Norma's past! Alice knew her mother would say that after she had gone, and they would wish Mr. Clayton could have heard her. "You seemed to be having a pretty good time yourself, Alice," she said as she was leaving. "Mr. Mason is going to be with us all summer; did he tell you?"

He hadn't, but he had said several things that sounded that way. He and Miss Sallie had walked





home with her. William Barnwell Mason was a good name in his part of the country, her father said.



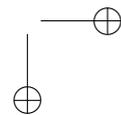
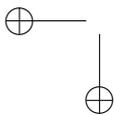
“Isn’t Thor coming with us? I don’t like to go walking without a dog.” Mr. Mason had asked her to show him some of the prettiest places around, that were not too far to walk to, and Sunday was his best day, he said, because that was the only one when they could go in the morning while it was still cool.

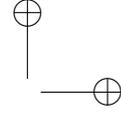
Alice shook her head. “I asked Annie Sue to keep him in the kitchen. I haven’t been off the place with him since that day.” They had started down the front steps, but now Mr. Mason stopped and looked at her. “I’m surprised at you,” he said, “holding his nature against him that way. Don’t you remember about ‘Tiger, tiger, burning bright’?”

She shook her head again.

“Let him come, then, and I will recite it to you. I’ll look out for pigs too.”

“Of course you are not old enough to have had many dogs,” he said when Thor had joined them and been given time to get over it and they were able to go on. “Maybe Thor is the only one you can remember.”





“We had a collie too, but he died. His name was Rob Roy.”

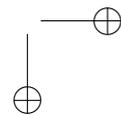
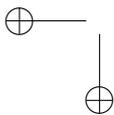
They walked on a little while and then Mr. Mason said: “People are always telling you about losing their dogs, but I don’t believe they ever really do. I’ll bet anything you still see your collie, in all the places where he would belong – that path there, for instance; suppose we take it.”

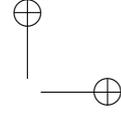
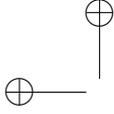
“I do sometimes,” Alice said after they had taken the path, “especially in the fall. He was just the color of the woods, and his tail would wave so –”

“I know; a collie is an autumn dog. My dogs – the ones at home, my father’s, really – were the kind that come back in the early morning. My father always got up at daybreak, and of course the dogs did too, and the first thing I always heard would be their voices – so everlastingly glad to see each other! I hear them in the ravine sometimes when I wake up, out here at the hotel. You have no idea how I like it.”

“Thor always barks in the night,” Alice said.

“Yes, and some day, years and years from now, you may be in a place that you have never seen – in another part of the world maybe – and hear a dog bark in the night, and you will say: ‘That’s Thor,’ and turn over and go to sleep again, feeling so nice and safe.” She was listening with the Saint Cecilia look, so he went on: “Or you’ll read something,





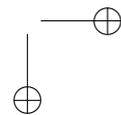
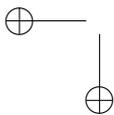
maybe in a book that hasn't been written yet, that some man says about a dog, and you will know it was Thor he was writing about."

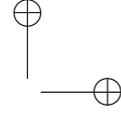
"Maybe by that time I will have forgotten all about the pig and how he looked with his jaws all bloody," Alice said. "Maybe he will look like a thoroughbred mastiff to me."

Mr. Mason nodded. "He will; more thorough than any mastiff you ever saw. The dogs of the past are a noble breed. And now I'm going to say you the poem."

As a rule when he talked this way and repeated poems, he had to do it to himself; but Alice evidently liked to listen; he could tell it, not by her answers so much, but by her eyes, and especially by her mouth, which occasionally came open just enough to give her face the rapt expression Saint Cecilia's might have had when she listened to celestial strains. The fact that Alice was only listening to him did not make it unbecoming. Everything depended on the kind of mouth it was.

This was the first walk they had taken together; he had hardly ever seen her when there were no other people around; but he must at odd moments have told her more of his personal history than he realized; he was beginning to notice how many things she seemed to know about him.



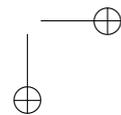
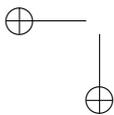


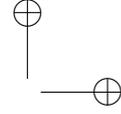
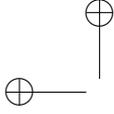
“Who lives there now – where you used to live – where the dogs were?” she asked him when it had turned out to be too hot for walking and they had sat down in the shade. Her voice was another thing. He could remember it, but not how it made him feel; the response was as immediate – as physical – as the vibration of a string. It was a voice to hear the most exquisite things in; he wanted to answer them instead of what she said. “Nobody lives there,” he answered now. “The darkies are supposed to look out for things; one old man in particular; but you know what that means. My father goes down whenever he can; my mother of course never can. Even if the wheeled chair could go, the dampness would kill her. That’s why she had to come away in the first place. Some of these days, Miss Alice, I’m going to make a whole lot of money; enough to have my mother’s garden weeded, and her piano tuned, and to fix some way to keep her warm when the wind blows off the river.”

“Is the house very big?” Alice asked him. “Is it ever so much bigger than ours?”

“It is bigger than anybody’s,” he said. “People don’t live in houses that big; only bats and owls.”

It sounded sad, she thought, but he didn’t look as if he was feeling sad. He had picked up some last year’s acorns and was chunking them at a





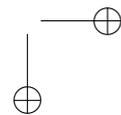
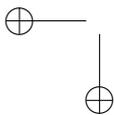
squirrel on a limb over their heads. How long did it usually take a man to make a lot of money? He was thirty-five already; older than Mr. Clayton, or Roddy, of course; twice as old as she was. She looked at him – since he was not looking at her; he had the nicest face!

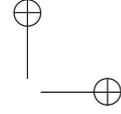
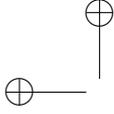
“I’m going to show you some pictures,” he told her, “or maybe a map; do you like to look at a map? Well, anyhow I’m going to explain to you some time how things are in my part of the country, and how they used to be. Those rice plantations, where all the money came from, are nearer to Pharaoh’s time than they are to ours. I ought to be taking you home now, though, oughtn’t I? You don’t want to miss your Sunday dinner.”

“You can tell me as we go along,” she said, getting up.

A place that she had never seen; a part of the world where she had never been. Would she ever see the place he was describing to her now as they walked home? He was startled at the sudden clearness with which he saw her there.

“It sounds lovely,” she said – “like Europe.” She had already asked him about Europe and knew that he had never been there, but there might be things in this country too that were old and romantic. This certainly sounded like one of them.





“Doesn’t it seem funny to you,” she asked him, “that I have never seen anything in my life that you could actually call picturesque? Just woods, and the ravine, of course, and the springs – none of the really beautiful places.”

“If you will wait until I make that money, I’ll get them all and bring them to you,” he said.

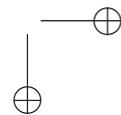
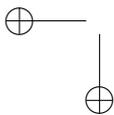
They walked through the ravine and stopped at the biggest spring for a drink. Alice told him how it used to look, back in the days when they waded there, with the water barely bubbling up through the sand. “And it tasted better, didn’t it?” he said; “nice and gritty. Do you ever want to go back and be a child again?”

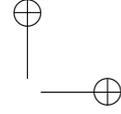
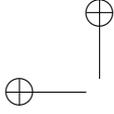
“I don’t believe so,” she said. “I don’t notice very much difference, except when I come down here – and the hotel, of course.”

“And naturally you wouldn’t want to give that up – all the nice people that come. Where are they, by the way? Why aren’t they down here drinking?”

“I expect they’ve all gone in to dinner – lunch, I mean. There are Mr. and Mrs. Dupree going up the steps.”

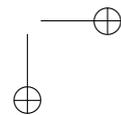
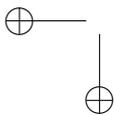
The dance had been two weeks before, and Mr. Dupree had not been back since. Miss Norma had made what she could of that, and it had been so much that Alice thought she would probably be

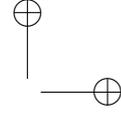
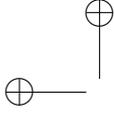




sorry to see him today, not only back, but acting as if nothing had happened. He had his arm around Mrs. Dupree, going up the steps that led out of the ravine, and they were both laughing at something. She looked beautiful – her figure did. She had on an organdie dress with bunches of pansies on it, and a lavender hat. Melvina said it took more than an hour to get around the ruffles on one of Mrs. Dupree's skirts. Melvina, though washing for the hotel and not for them, still took an interest in their welfare and stopped by to see them now and then on her way home. Between her and Miss Norma they were learning rather more about Mrs. Dupree's wardrobe than they were supposed to know.

Roddy was at home now, but not in spirit. Going to college, Alice decided, must be something she could not understand without having the experience. Vanderbilt and Vassar: Roddy seemed to feel so much the way Paula did, it made her think colleges must be very much alike, or maybe boys and girls were not so different as she had always imagined they were. And another thing college apparently did for them was to just cut their lives in two. All of Roddy's life before he went away had lost interest for him completely. She and Rose had given up trying to talk to him about the past, and even all the new things that had happened

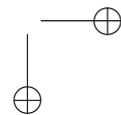
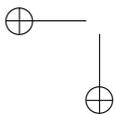


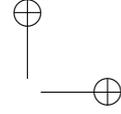
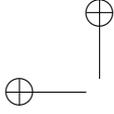


didn't seem to be the least bit exciting to him. They had thought it would be nice to have him to go down to the hotel with in the evenings.

Thor was the only thing, as far as they could see, that Roddy seemed to feel the same about, and a dog probably doesn't notice changes in people anyway. Thor would miss Roddy as much as ever when he went back, but she and Rose wouldn't. He was going to spend the last half of his vacation with the same classmate – the one whose family had a cottage in the mountains. Last summer he had talked all the time about the scenery, and the cool nights, but this summer he told them more about the people, especially a girl he called Miss Wellford – when he could remember not to call her Bella. One day when he was looking at a magazine he showed Alice a picture that he said looked like Miss Wellford. It was Lady Hamilton, in a swing, by Romney.

"I do hope he isn't going to do anything foolish; at least not until after he graduates," her mother said when Alice showed her the picture. Her father looked at it too. "Must be Armistead Wellford's daughter," he said. "He married a mighty pretty girl; prettier than this one." Even the greatest artists couldn't paint a girl as beautiful as the ones people remembered. It reminded Alice of





what Mr. Mason had said about the dogs of the past.

“I used to mind it when people said I would never be as pretty as my mother was,” she told him one day when they were talking. “I minded it not only for myself but for her too; it sounded as if the family was deteriorating.”

“Who ever said such an absurd thing as that?” he asked her.

“Everybody did, if they remembered how she looked when she was young. That picture in the parlor doesn’t do her justice.”

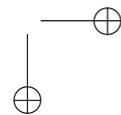
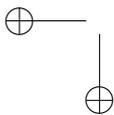
“All the same, it’s absurd,” he said. “Now, in my case, my mother really was a lot prettier than I am, and some day I’m going to show you the little picture I have of her. She had poetry written to her too; I’d like to show you that. Some of it was even published.”

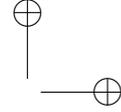
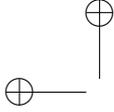
“Don’t you remember any of it?”

He shook his head. “It wasn’t that kind. I only remember two lines; they were – my mother’s hair was dark and somebody must have been quoting Byron about it – so the poem begins:

*Like the night? Ah, rather say  
She walks in splendor like the day –*

Like the day when poets could write what they pleased and editors would meet them halfway; it



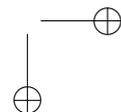
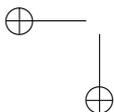


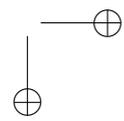
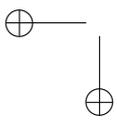
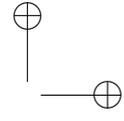
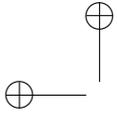
must have been splendid. If I were to write you a poem, I would probably have no end of trouble getting it published. Or an acrostic; maybe you would like an acrostic better.”

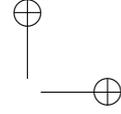
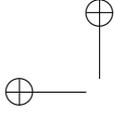
“That is a sort of charade, isn’t it?”

“Much harder. The idea was to be as cryptic as possible; so that your rival, or the lady’s husband if she happened to have one, would get discouraged trying to read it.”

Alice thought about Mrs. Dupree. It was easy to imagine somebody writing her a cryptic poem, but she didn’t believe Mr. Dupree would worry about it, whether he could read it or not, the way he did about the dancing – or the way Miss Norma said he did. She may have got that idea all by herself, though she probably hadn’t kept it to herself. Alice wondered if Mr. Mason had heard anything about it. He hardly ever mentioned anybody at the hotel. She didn’t even know whether he thought Mrs. Dupree was beautiful. Roddy didn’t. He thought she danced better than anybody, but he said a woman had to have a brain about her somewhere before she could be what he called beautiful. He thought it was funny for her to let Alonzo drive her around the country in his buckboard. He had seen them two or three times. Alonzo was a big fool to be doing that sort of thing, Roddy said.



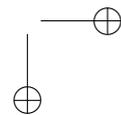
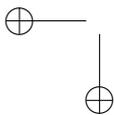


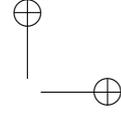
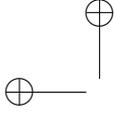


Mrs. Hill hardly ever went anywhere in the buckboard, even to please Alonzo. When she used the horse, which was not often, she preferred to have it hitched to the buggy of other days. She felt conspicuous, she told him, sitting up so high, and he had to drive her; in the buggy she could drive herself.

She was not as long as usual in returning Mrs. Macgowan's visit. Months often went by without friendly interchanges between them, but this summer, what with all the coming and going occasioned by the hotel, the neighborhood was more sociable; people seemed to have more in common.

"But I can't stay long," she announced, getting out carefully on account of the wheels, which were muddy, and her skirts, which were so far immaculate. "He will stand," she said.





“The road must be dreadful!” Mrs. Macgowan exclaimed. “Did you ever hear such a downpour! The garden is a wreck; I am not going to even let you see it; and my peonies were just in their glory too. When I went out there this morning, the last one of them was standing on its head in the mud. Let’s sit here on the porch and I’ll tell Annie Sue to bring us a cup of tea.”

“Where are the girls?” Mrs. Hill inquired, glancing through the open door into the hall.

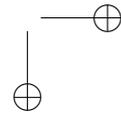
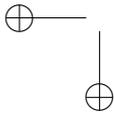
“Both gone to town,” Mrs. Macgowan said. “Sit here in the rocker; I’ll be right back.”

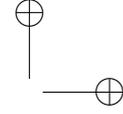
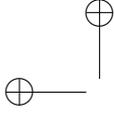
“I presume you can see the hotel from this point of vantage when the leaves are off the trees,” Mrs. Hill remarked when her hostess had returned and was drawing up a small table for the tea.

“Not much of it; only one corner. It’s really funny how completely we forget about its being there, in the winter time.”

“Have you made the acquaintance of many of the guests?”

“Not as many as Alice and Rose have. A few of my friends are there at present. I believe it’s being quite a success this summer. I dare say Alonzo can tell you more about that than we can.” Mrs. Macgowan smiled; her reference was intended as a light introduction to the topic she imagined must be uppermost in Mrs. Hill’s thoughts: Alonzo’s





continued prosperity. It was uppermost in her thoughts too. She knew he was doing well, but she wanted to know how well; she would have liked nothing better than to get down to brass tacks on the subject: how much had he made already – how much did he think he would make by the end of the season? She could hear herself asking these vulgar questions, but she could not hear Mrs. Hill answering them except in a figure of speech. And even this imperfect satisfaction had to be postponed because Annie Sue was coming with the tea.

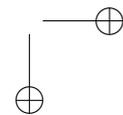
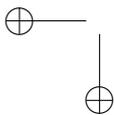
“How are you, Annie Sue?” Mrs. Hill asked her.

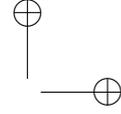
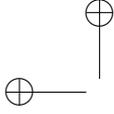
“Jus’ tol’able.” Annie Sue acknowledged the greeting with this moderate statement and went on to say she had fixed them some cinnamon toast instead of plain bread and butter.

“I hear Melvina is now regularly employed at the hotel,” Mrs. Hill said when the amenities were over and Annie Sue had retired. “I see her occasionally. They are on my place this year; Henry and the boys are making a crop.”

“We see her too. She stops in sometimes on her way home.” At any rate they were still talking about the hotel. In a minute, Mrs. Macgowan thought, she would get back to Alonzo.

“Have you had occasion to see anything further of the lady you were kind enough to take back





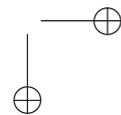
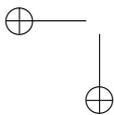
with you “the afternoon you came to call?” Mrs. Hill inquired after a pause of some duration.

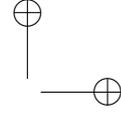
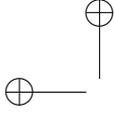
Mrs. Macgowan found her hesitation puzzling for a moment, then suddenly too clear. It was not Alonzo she wanted to talk about; it was Mrs. Dupree – or maybe it was both. “Why, yes,” she said. “She and the children walk up sometimes – more to amuse themselves than for a visit; really because she hasn’t anything else to do, I suppose. They look at the flowers, and sit here on the steps – we ask them in of course. Have you seen her again? It’s too far for her to take the children out there, I should think.”

Mrs. Hill did not answer. The door at the other end of the hall had opened; Annie Sue was coming to take away the tray – “ef you’s finished?” she said. “Your toast was excellent, Annie Sue,” Mrs. Hill told her, and waited until the door was shut again.

“You are a friend of such long standing,” she then began, “and already conversant with the circumstances of my life –” She stopped.

Mrs. Macgowan leaned over and laid her hand on the stiff folds of gingham that were its nearest approach to Mrs. Hill’s knee. “Do tell me what it is that troubles you,” she said. “Tell me quite plainly, and I will tell you plainly what I think. And first of all I want to say that Mrs. Dupree



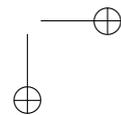
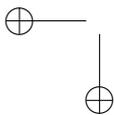


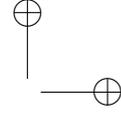
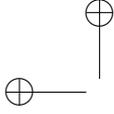
impresses me as a pretty woman with very little sense; I don't believe she has any idea of causing trouble. Is she flirting with Alonzo – is that it?" This was not a figure of speech, but if they had to begin away back in the circumstances of Mrs. Hill's life!

"Of Alonzo's history too you know enough" – Mrs. Hill was not to be deflected – "to make it possible for you to understand how apprehensive I must be when I see him subjected to temptation of this nature. She may have no intention that could be called directly harmful; she may even be a fool, as you suggest; but the blood that flows in Alonzo's veins is not my blood; I must remember his inheritance." She had disregarded the hand still resting on her knee, but Mrs. Macgowan could feel that the knee was trembling.

"The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge," she said.

Which was a figure of speech and, as such, impressive enough, but it seemed to Mrs. Macgowan to be only broadly applicable to Alonzo, whose behavior in the present instance struck her as being very much what that of any other very young man of limited experience and not unlimited intelligence might have been. Alonzo had always been a good boy, so far as she knew, as well as a pretty one, but she had never heard, even from

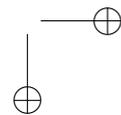
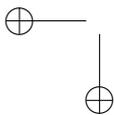


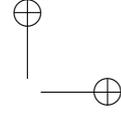
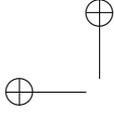


Mrs. Hill, that he was particularly bright. It was the first time she had ever heard her mention the sour grapes, which no doubt went back to the same source as his exotic appearance.

“But falling in love is something every boy is bound to do sooner or later,” she suggested; “and in this case at least it can’t last very long, because she will be going away. I know how it makes you feel to think she is only amusing herself – if he is really taking it seriously – and yet it is better for it to be like that. It is just another case of Satan finding some mischief still –” Was that in the Bible too? At all events, Mrs. Hill made no reply to it. She sat in silence for a while and then said: “I have a request to make of you – unusual in its nature, but still I hope that you will not refuse. I am going to ask you to speak to Mrs. Dupree on this subject; I want you to lay before her –”

Mrs. Macgowan waited for the metaphor, the quotation – for something that would give her an idea of what she was expected to offer Mrs. Dupree as a reason for a different line of conduct from the one she saw fit to pursue at present with regard to Alonzo. It appeared, however, that she was to be left without even a figure of speech to aid her imagination. She would just have to promise what she could without it.

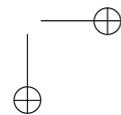
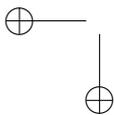


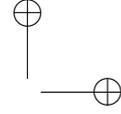
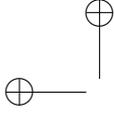


“Very well,” she said, “I will explain to her that she is interfering with Alonzo’s work. I can tell her how well he has been doing – and how much depends on his doing well. There are really a lot of things I can say to make her realize – at least to make her stop and think about the harm she may do in a case like this without intending it.” Her face brightened. “There are Alice and Rose now, just coming through the gate. I didn’t hear the car, did you?”



On an afternoon a few days later Alice and Rose, each holding one of Mrs. Dupree’s little girls by the hand, had gone down to the pond in the pasture to show them the baby ducks, that being the most remote point of interest they could think of at the moment. “Take them off somewhere and keep them while I talk to their mother.” Such had been the injunction laid upon them by their own mother – and very hurriedly at that; they had seen Mrs. Dupree and the children walking up from the hotel and there had been no time for an explanation of the strategy to be employed before it was time to employ it. The little girls were enchanted with the ducks, but Alice and Rose kept wondering what was going on in the garden, where their mother





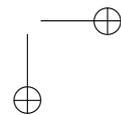
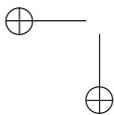
had taken Mrs. Dupree. She ought to be an easy person to talk to, since she talked so little herself; but what about? Could it be any of the things Miss Norma had been saying? Or Roddy?

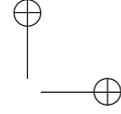
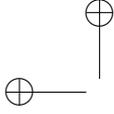
Mrs. Macgowan had taken her into the garden without thinking; she turned that way instinctively, as to a field she knew, whenever anything had to be met, or escaped from – or both, she might have said in this instance. Mrs. Dupree, in a white embroidered swiss and a floppy hat, did not impress her as being anything formidable to meet, but it was Alonzo who would have to do the escaping. “Suppose we sit here and look up at that cloud of pink,” she suggested, indicating the bench by the rose trellis. “It’s the Lady Gay; I suppose you have it too.”

Mrs. Dupree did not answer, but she made no objection to sitting down, or even to looking up. Her eyes were lovely – sweet; she probably was sweet. “I am glad you came up this afternoon,” Mrs. Macgowan pursued, cheerfully; “there is something I have been wanting to say to you.”

Mrs. Dupree made no objection to that either. She arranged her light skirts and turned the floppy hat toward Mrs. Macgowan. “Is there?” she said, and added: “What about?”

Talking little herself did not make her an easy person to talk to, but Mrs. Macgowan began. “It’s





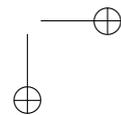
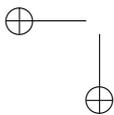
about Mrs. Hill, and Alonzo – her son. You remember the day I met you there –” it was not really a question and Mrs. Dupree did not answer it, so she kept on: “I don’t know how much you have seen of them since you have been at the hotel, but I have known them a long time, and I would like to tell you a little about them – some of the things you would not be apt to have found out even if you have seen them a great deal.”

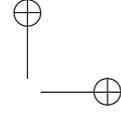
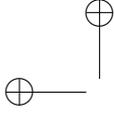
“Do you mean about him being her adopted son? He told me that,” Mrs. Dupree said.

“Yes, but did he tell you about how much she has done for him – all the sacrifices she has made; and how much she has hoped he would be to her when he grew up?”

This was a question, and Mrs. Dupree answered it with a shake of the floppy hat. “We were not talking about anything like that,” she said, “not about anything special. I was just asking him how he happened to look so different. His eyes – they are quite remarkable-looking, don’t you think so, for a boy like that?”

“But all sorts of boys have handsome eyes,” Mrs. Macgowan said. “It isn’t always a good idea to tell them so, however. That is exactly what I wanted to talk to you about – that you ought not to let him see that you think he is good-looking. He is too – too inexperienced for that sort of flattery. A





woman like you –” She stopped; she was finding it suddenly too easy to talk to a woman like Mrs. Dupree; it would do no good to offend her.

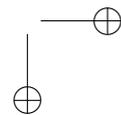
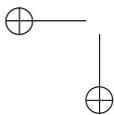
She was not offended; she even looked interested for the first time; she even smiled. “What did he say about me?” she asked.

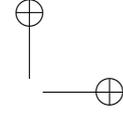
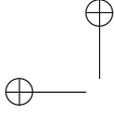
Mrs. Macgowan looked at her in astonishment. She had prepared herself to cope with stupidity; she thought she had allowed for vanity, being really under the impression that they were a good deal the same thing. But they were not: a stupid woman might blunder, but a woman as vain as this one might do anything. She might even let herself become infatuated with the admiration of an ignorant country boy.

“He has said nothing to me about you,” she said quietly, “but I am sure he admires you – as we all do. It is always a pleasure to us to see you, and to see the children –”

“Thank you,” Mrs. Dupree put in politely, but the smile had gone.

“And I believe,” Mrs. Macgowan continued, “now that we have had this little talk – now that I have explained to you how we all feel – that you will not want to do anything to make us feel differently – to make us admire you less. We must cut you some roses,” she said. She was not changing the subject; she was giving up. “Where did the children go?”





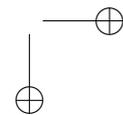
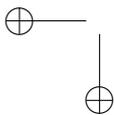
Alice and Rose, coming up with the little girls and seeing Mrs. Dupree with her flowers, were sure the talk, whatever it was about, must have ended pleasantly. "Did she say anything?" they asked their mother as soon as it was safe to ask.

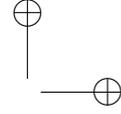
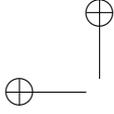
Mrs. Macgowan was watching the three white figures go off under the trees. "And those lovely children!" she said, apparently in answer to some question of her own. "Somebody had to talk to her," she explained to Alice and Rose. "She really has very little sense. She is carrying on some kind of a flirtation with Alonzo, and poor Mrs. Hill is worried about it."

They listened with interest. "Do you mean —"

"I mean she is taking his mind off of his work. But whatever we do, we mustn't say anything before Miss Norma; or Roddy either," she added, knowing only too well how little was likely to be gained by either of these observances — just as Alice and Rose knew how little was likely to be lost: all they had to do was to wait until Miss Norma, and Roddy too no doubt, should say something before them. Unless Mrs. Dupree went home or somewhere after what their mother had said to her.

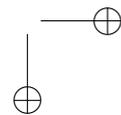
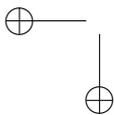
They were almost afraid she would, but she had not done so several days later when Roddy saw her out driving in the buckboard again. "No

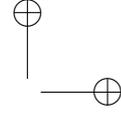
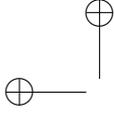




children along, either,” Roddy said; “just her and the toreador. He looks more like the picture on a cigar box than ever, with that mustache.”

“Alonzo!” Alice exclaimed. “Why, when did he —” She had never thought of Alonzo in the light of a mustache; and it had been such a little while since he brought the strawberries. She glanced apprehensively at Roddy’s upper lip; what if he should start this difference, on top of all the others? It had never occurred to her before what a curious thing it was that a boy could change himself into a man all at once that way. It was not like the changes that time had to make — the lines that had to be gone over and over to make them stay. This happened suddenly — like a signal. And when it was there, it was part of his face; you couldn’t see him without it even if you shut your eyes. She tried to imagine her father’s face smooth like a boy’s. Or Mr. Mason without the dark line that followed his lip and turned up at the corners when he smiled. She shut her eyes for Mr. Mason too and saw him leaning against a tree trunk, his hands clasped behind his head, smiling at something she was saying. They went walking in the woods a good deal these days, or rather they went into the woods a good deal and sat down; it was too hot most of the time to do anything else. He always took off his hat under the first tree, as if they were





going into church. The last walk they took he had just had a letter from his father. It was headed: "From the Battlements at Elsinore."

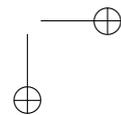
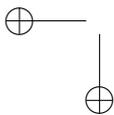
"He's at home now," Mr. Mason explained, "down in the country; he says it always makes him feel like a ghost, to go back. God knows what he feels like in town, in that apartment. Comfortable. That is all either of them will ever say. But they don't want to be just comfortable. Would you? A lot of people these days seem to think that is the only consideration." He looked at her thoughtfully. "Have you ever noticed that, Miss Alice?"

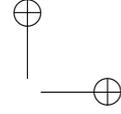
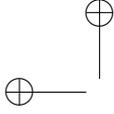
She didn't answer immediately; she was a little doubtful about what he meant.

"I mean have you noticed how people use that word to explain the way they live, and the things they live in – a comfortable flat – a comfortable apartment? They even take you around and show it to you – 'and here is the kitchenette.' You are never going to have a kitchenette, are you? You couldn't; it would turn into something else the minute you put your foot in it.

*Where'er you walk cool airs shall fan the glade,  
Trees where you sit shall crowd into a shade,"*

he sang. "Handel must have felt about the woods just as we do. "*Ombra mai fù*" – Maybe Rose will





play them for us. Why don't you take off your hat? You wouldn't get any freckles under here."

She took it off and laid it on the ground beside her.

"All that hair! And nobody ever sees it, I suppose, except when it's being combed – or laundered. How do you manage about drying it? Hang it on the line?"

"On the grass; I bend over –" She showed him. "Rose's is longer than mine."

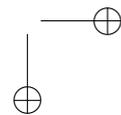
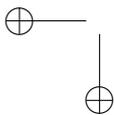
"Fabulous. No wonder all the fairy tales are tangled in it. But to go back to my father: he has to be down there as much as possible in the summer, or else just give up any idea of a plantation. It's a losing game any way you look at it, but if the time ever does come when we can go back to it, we will be glad for every acre that hasn't gone under the weeds."

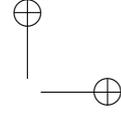
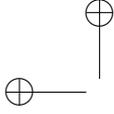
She sat quite still, her hands lying open in her lap, her eyes on his face, listening.

"And the house – a lot of things have got to be done to the house before I let you see it," he said.

"Did you forget about the pictures you were going to show me?"

He shook his head. "I didn't forget. I got scared. I said to myself: 'Suppose she didn't like it; what would you do then?'"





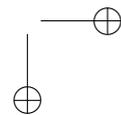
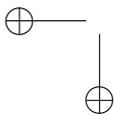
Alice was sure she would like it, though, if it was the way it sounded. He seemed to her to belong in just that kind of a place; not the battlements of Elsinore exactly, but certainly not anything like the Cotton Exchange. There were a number of high, dim places without geographical connection in which her thoughts had always felt free to wander.

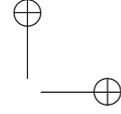
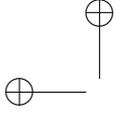


In Miss Norma's opinion matters had now reached a point where Mr. Deering might be expected to take a hand. Though it would perhaps be better if he let his wife do it, because she could talk to Mrs. Dupree, which naturally he couldn't, and – also in Miss Norma's opinion – you ought to let the men stay out of it anyway as long as you possibly could. She had said this in the course of a recent breathing-spell, and she had been obliged to say it before Alice and Rose because they stood their ground and would not give her a chance to say it behind them.

“How much longer is she planning to stay?” Mrs. Macgowan asked.

“Well, of course their arrangement is by the month,” Miss Norma said, “but the way I look at it, she ought not to have been left here in the

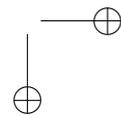
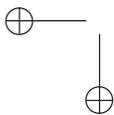


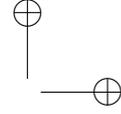
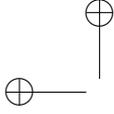


first place with nobody but a nurse and children. A woman as slack-twisted as that needs to have somebody to look after her. If he is too busy, then they must have some relation, an aunt or something, that would be only too glad to have her expenses paid for the summer in a place like this. Not but what Alonzo Hill needs looking after too. Nobody ever accused him of having any too much sense, but the good Lord didn't intend for him to be as big a fool as she's making of him. I wonder how much Mrs. Hill knows. She maybe don't see a great deal, but she's bound to hear things. Even the niggers could tell her."

"Let us hope they don't," Mrs. Macgowan said. "She is the one who would really be hurt if Alonzo's conduct should be criticized by the people at the hotel. She has so much pride."

"Yes, and it wouldn't be only her pride that would suffer if Alonzo got himself criticized off the premises," Miss Norma said, "Those two people can't eat all the things he's raised out there. But if he don't look out that's about what is going to happen. I told Mr. Deering this morning he ought to stop Alonzo from coming around, before Mr. Dupree gets back here again. If Alonzo was my son, or even my adopted son, I'd want to keep all the distance I could between him and a man like Jerry Dupree, with all the talking that's going on."





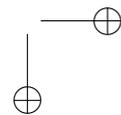
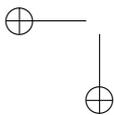
She spoke as one conversant with the behavior naturally to be expected from such men as Mr. Dupree, and Alice wondered if the man she married had been among the stocky and heavy-set.

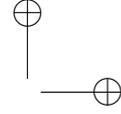
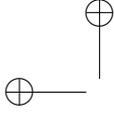
“But aren’t you afraid you may be advising Mr. Deering to do something that might make matters worse?” Mrs. Macgowan suggested. “If he should take a stand like that it would put such a serious construction on the whole thing. Why couldn’t he just give Alonzo a little friendly advice? Just tell him, for instance —” She hesitated and was lost.

“Tell him he’s too pretty to come around where the ladies can see him? What’s the difference between that and ordering him off?”

Mrs. Macgowan laughed. “He might like it better. But I don’t believe Alonzo wants to make himself conspicuous in that way either — not in any way. Hardly anybody likes to fly in the face of public opinion. Even Mrs. Dupree wouldn’t want to feel that people were disapproving of her. I’m sure she wants above everything to be admired — admired by everybody, I mean.”

“Then she’d better give everybody credit for being able to put two and two together,” Miss Norma said. “All that gallivanting around to amuse the children! Who did she expect to believe that, I wonder, even if she did have one or two of them along sometimes, and at least it was in the daytime



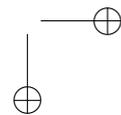
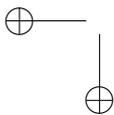


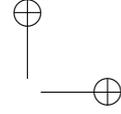
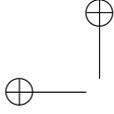
when they might have been along; but who is she going to say she's amusing walking down by the springs and sitting around on the benches at night when the children are in bed?"

This was no doubt the point to which the whole breathing-spell had been working up, and Miss Norma, looking a little doubtfully at Alice and Rose, waited. But it took them all a little while to make out exactly at what the point was pointing.

"I can't claim to see very much myself of what goes on in the evening, after the day I've had," Miss Norma went on. "The thing I'm interested in is doing something that will rest my feet, and that's not going up and down those steps to the ravine. This is one time when I've got to depend on hearsay. But there's several have told me they've seen her and Alonzo down there at night, and left them down there too. Naturally he don't show up at the hotel; he just waits down at the springs."

They all saw now. Alice and Rose looked at their mother, waiting for her to say something; hoping it would not be, as it so often was, that she just didn't believe a word of it. And it was not quite so bad as that, though they could see that Miss Norma was disappointed. For even now their mother didn't think Alonzo ought to be kept off of the premises. She said the people at the hotel were just summer people, and Mrs. Hill and

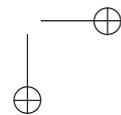
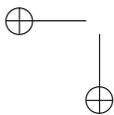


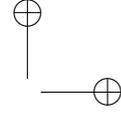
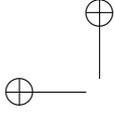


Alonzo were neighbors. “They will be here after the others are gone and forgotten,” she reminded Miss Norma. She reminded her too about how many of the people in the neighborhood she had got work for at the hotel – especially the darkies. “I’ve often thought how lucky it was for you to be there to explain things to them. Poor Mr. and Mrs. Deering would have given up in despair and sent back to Chicago for their servants. Melvina told me about how you stood between her and the washing machine till she got the hang of it.”

“And now she’s one of the best laundresses they ever had,” Miss Norma said proudly, and Alice and Rose looked at each other. When their mother took that tone they knew exactly how it made people feel. They could see Miss Norma changing under their eyes, and her own too, into a benefactress or something; better but not so interesting as she really was.

“I wouldn’t be surprised,” their mother went on, “if you are not the very one who is responsible for Alonzo’s coming to the hotel in the first place. If you hadn’t been there to point out how much better his things were than the ones sent out from town in crates –” It always worked, but not permanently; they knew that too. Roddy was gone now, but Alice believed he would have simply hooted at the idea of appealing to everybody’s better nature;





especially in a summer hotel where they didn't have it along, he would probably have said. She wondered what Mr. Mason would say. He never talked about the summer people, as her mother called them. After all, he was really one of them himself.

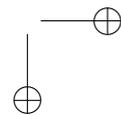
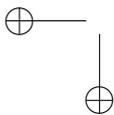
But the next time they went walking he did talk a little about Miss Norma. "Our Miss Giddings, who looks after us all so beautifully," he called her, "she is on the go most of the time, but she stops and talks to me, if nobody else is doing it. She doesn't like to see me abandoned to a book."

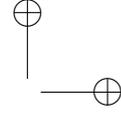
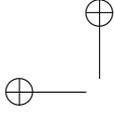
Alice laughed, but she was wondering what Miss Norma talked about – if it could ever have been about Mrs. Dupree.

"Sometimes she talks about you," he said. "She was telling me the other day how long she has known you, and how you used to look back in the pinafore era. Chubby was her word. She seemed to think I would be interested."

"Did she tell you she was the one who made the pinafores? She used to help Mamma make our clothes before we got old enough to sew ourselves. Miss Norma is awfully smart; she can do practically anything."

"So I should imagine. And has everybody's interest at heart. She can't do too much for us,





there at the hotel. She wants us to be not only happy but good, Miss Giddings does.”

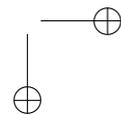
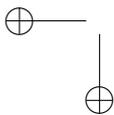
Alice laughed again. “I know; she comes up and talks to us too.”

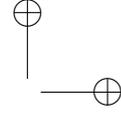
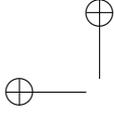
“Then I hope she tells you about me – how good and happy I am,” he said.

Alice looked at him, leaning back against his tree, and smiled because she knew he meant for her to; she was thinking that he really did look happy, in the serious sort of way she had noticed before; she had never thought about whether he was good. It was Sunday morning, and certainly he was not in church. They had gone walking every Sunday morning that it didn’t rain.

“And so,” he said presently, “you stopped wearing pinafores, and stopped being chubby, and changed yourself into a young lady in a long dress, without ever going away anywhere – not even to school. I thought it was more trouble than that; I had an idea a lot of people had to work over it.”

“Maybe they still have to,” she said. “I’m not supposed to be through. Rose and I are supposed to travel, and study music, and learn languages so that we can really speak them. Papa has always talked about sending us to Europe, but I believe the time is about to slip up on him. He doesn’t realize how old we are getting.”



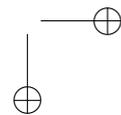
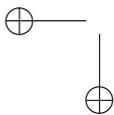


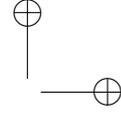
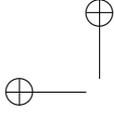
“And how do you feel about it?” he asked her. “You told me you never wanted to go back and have the past over again; are you in any hurry to have the future? Do you think about it much – about the kind of future you want it to be?”

“Yes, I believe I do – quite a lot. It’s really feelings, more than thoughts, that I have about it. And certainly having them about the past wouldn’t do any good; I couldn’t change that anyway.”

“You’d be surprised,” he said. “I’m not advising you to start doing it; it gets to be a fatal habit; but there is nothing we can change as much. I’ve worked on mine until I’ve made it into something I don’t believe I’d recognize if I saw it. Here lately, though, I’ve decided to quit it. You see, I’ve had a lot more past than you have; that makes a difference.”

She looked at him, trying to imagine the difference that had been made. What would he be like with no more past than hers? The long legs stretched out on the grass, and the dark hair that he kept pushing back, and his gray eyes would have been about the same, she supposed; but she knew she would not have felt about him the way she did now; as if he had been somewhere that she had always dreamed of going and could tell her about it. Some books were like that, but she





had never known a man before who was. Not Mr. Clayton, and certainly not Roddy.



Melvina was wrapping something up in a newspaper when Alice came into the kitchen. She had been sitting by the table talking to Annie Sue for the longest time; Annie Sue was shelling the butter beans for supper, and they both stopped talking the minute Alice opened the door. "Well, I better be gettin' along," Melvina said.

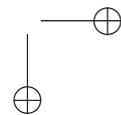
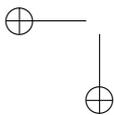
"Show Miss Alice what you got this time," Annie Sue said. "I laughs at Mel, tryin' to squeeze herse'f into clo's that ain't big enough for her little finger. She say she gives, but there ain't nobody gives that much."

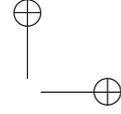
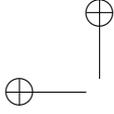
"Have you got another dress, Melvina?" Alice asked.

"She's got somethin' she's been wantin' a whole lot mo' than any dress," Annie Sue said; "somethin' she's been *really* wantin'."

"I don't believe there's anything she really needs, though," Alice said. "You'd like to work at the hotel even if they didn't pay you, wouldn't you, Melvina?"

Annie Sue put her beans down and went around to where Melvina stood. "I'll show it to her, then,"





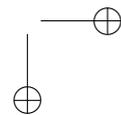
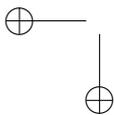
she said, taking the bundle and spreading it out on the table. "She's been tryin' to get Mrs. Dupree to give it to her all summer, an' now she's got it. There ain't nobody's dress Mel can't get into now – once she gets into this!"

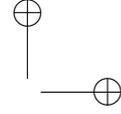
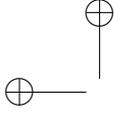
Alice looked at the pink satin garment lying on the newspaper. Its interminable lacings and its determined bones measured up to Miss Norma's description of the most expensive corset you could buy. She looked at Melvina's "shape" and thought about Miss Norma's – both of them expecting somehow to be poured into this mold. "Of course you can let the strings out a whole lot," she told Melvina, not knowing what other encouragement to give.

"I 'spec she can't hardly wait for Sunday to get here befo' she shines out in it," Annie Sue reflected when Melvina had departed. She had almost had time to get home before they found the letter lying under the table.

"Mel 'bout dropped it out of the paper when she was rollin' her corset back up." Annie Sue had retrieved it and handed it to Alice. It was carefully sealed and addressed in a large flowing hand to Mr. Alonzo Hill.

"That silly woman!" her mother said when Alice took it in and showed it to her.





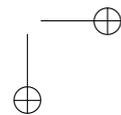
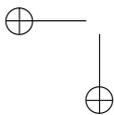
“How can we get it to him? Or maybe it would be better to just give it back to her,” Alice said.

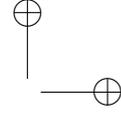
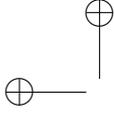
Mrs. Macgowan held the letter in her hand, thinking. “Give it back to Annie Sue,” she said, “and tell her to give it to Melvina the next time she comes by.” She handed the letter to Alice.

“But that might not be for several days. Oughtn’t we at least to let her know – I mean Mrs. Dupree – in case it might be something important?”

“I’m afraid it hasn’t even that excuse,” Mrs. Macgowan said. “She may write to him whenever she thinks she has something to say. I don’t want her to think we know anything about it. She really does need somebody to look after her! Give it to Annie Sue – And tell her to see if she can get enough raspberries for supper. It’s too late to make the pie.”

Upstairs in her room, putting on her coolest dress to celebrate the close of what had surely been the hottest day, Alice wished she could lay the matter before Rose. But Rose had gone in town to spend the night with Miss Sallie Kent and go to a concert. She would melt, but she would be unconscious anyhow the minute Melba opened her mouth. In spite of what her mother had said, Alice still felt that they ought to do something a little better – a little kinder, maybe – than just giving the letter back to Melvina. Even if Mrs.



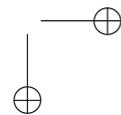
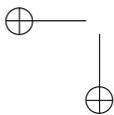


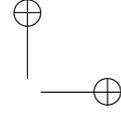
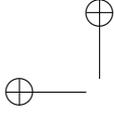
Dupree did write to Alonzo whenever she felt like it, that didn't keep this one from being important; she still believed it was important – on account of the corset, which looked practically new.

Those were the longest days. There were hours of daylight after supper when they could sit on the porch and talk, or even read, without having to go inside and light a lamp. But the hotel was always a blaze of electricity. "They miss all the prettiest part of the day," Alice said when she and Mr. Mason had wandered down on the lawn to where they could see the people sitting on the veranda. Some of them were playing whist at little tables; all of them were fanning away the bugs.

"Yes, don't they?" he said. "But everybody has to see what everybody else is doing, and they can't do that in the gloaming. This evening especially. Has Miss Giddings been up with the news? Did you know that Othello showed up shortly after lunch without telling a soul he was coming – not even Miss Giddings? I mean Mr. Dupree," he said, for Alice was not smiling. She knew he meant Mr. Dupree; she was wondering about the letter.

"Does everybody at the hotel believe he is so jealous, or just Miss Norma?" she asked him. "Sometimes I think she must have been married to a sort of Othello – you knew about her being married, didn't you?"





“I know everything,” he said.

“Well, couldn’t that be the reason she expects other people’s husbands to behave the same way? Mamma thinks she can do a lot of harm, saying those things to just anybody.”

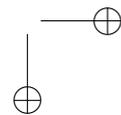
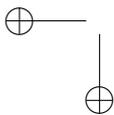
“Yes, but think of the pleasure she gives! This evening, for instance – all of us over there expecting something exciting to happen. One of the waiters dropped a tray, or maybe it was a fork, during dinner, and everybody jumped and looked around exactly as if a gun had gone off.”

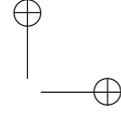
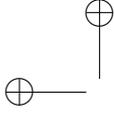
Alice laughed, but all the same she was wondering, if Mr. Mason knew about the letter, whether he would think that was a joke too. Or if her mother knew Mr. Dupree had come back suddenly this afternoon, would she still think the letter was not important. The more she thought about it, the more she believed that something depended on Alonzo’s getting it. If there were only some way for Mrs. Dupree to be told without somebody having to tell her. Naturally nobody would want to do that.

“Maybe you will think I am as bad as Miss Norma,” she said suddenly, “but something happened this afternoon – you know who Mr. Dupree is supposed to be jealous of, don’t you?”

“I told you I know everything,” he said.

“But it was that man from New Orleans –”





“And now it’s the young farmer who brings the vegetables – name of Alonzo.”

She nodded. “Well, Mrs. Dupree wrote him a letter this afternoon – it must have been after Mr. Dupree came – and he never got it –”

He looked at her. “You seem to be the one who knows everything,” he said. “Who did get it? Not Miss Giddings, I hope.”

“Nobody got it. The person she sent it by lost it; at least she dropped it; it was under the kitchen table.”

“Nice safe place. Can the cook read?”

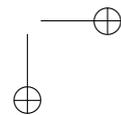
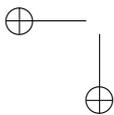
“That’s not what I’m afraid of. I’m afraid she might have been trying to send him some word about not coming to the hotel,” Alice said.

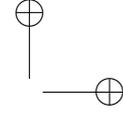
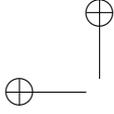
“Who was the messenger, if you don’t mind? Anybody you know?”

She nodded. “Somebody that used to work for us. She works at the hotel now. Her name is Melvina Ford; she lives on Alonzo’s mother’s place.”

“Maybe she carries letters all the time. This one needn’t have been anything special.”

“That’s what Mamma thought, but I’m almost sure it was, because Melvina showed me what Mrs. Dupree had given her – she didn’t say what for, but I’m sure it was for the letter – for being careful to give him the letter –”





“Which is still under the kitchen table, I gather?”  
He smiled at her; she knew she must sound like Miss Norma – so intense.

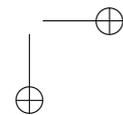
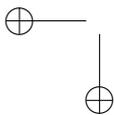
“I can’t help it,” she said. “I know I’m going to think about it in the night, if I wake up.”

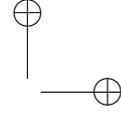
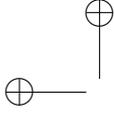
“We mustn’t let that happen,” he said. “After all, I’m not there at the hotel for nothing. Who do you think I’d better keep my eye on – Othello, or Desdemona, or Cassio? You don’t want to walk over there a little while yourself and see what’s going on? It looks pretty quiet from here.”

She shook her head. “No, but I’m glad I told you, whether you laugh about it or not. Do you ever see Alonzo down at the springs or anywhere in the evenings?” she asked him as they walked back to the house.

He never had, he told her, but then he seldom went down to the springs himself. He did not tell her he had sometimes seen a lady in a light dress coming up, rather late to be coming by herself. He still had the room that overlooked the ravine.

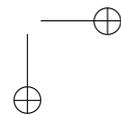
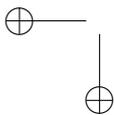
They walked back to the house and talked about so many things that Alice almost forgot about the letter; but he did not. “I’d better be getting back to help Miss Giddings,” he said when he took his leave. “Don’t you wake up in the night, and whatever you do, don’t think.”

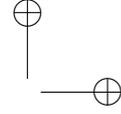
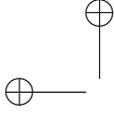




He seldom went down to the springs. He had told Alice that with no intention of going there tonight, but it occurred to him, walking back to the hotel, that he might at least check on the contingency of a broken rendezvous; in case of which he would be likely to find half of it somewhere down in the ravine waiting around; it was still too early to have given up and gone. He stood at the top of the steps and looked down; there were lights at all the springs, and there were still people; he could see an occasional pair of them moving in and out of the shadows. It might even be too early to have come. He went down the steps and walked to the upper end of the ravine, where the springs and the lights gave out, and even the benches. It was still pretty at that end, and wild in a tame sort of way. He had thought, looking down on it from his window, that it all must have looked like that when she went wading in the little stream.

The final spring, with one rather small light above it, and one bench, was still ahead of him when he decided to turn and go back. There was nobody sitting on the bench; he could see that; but just then he saw that somebody who might be going to sit on it was approaching from farther up the ravine, so he walked on. He even whistled casually; whoever it was, he wanted to seem casual,





and if it was Alonzo he didn't want to seem Mrs. Dupree.

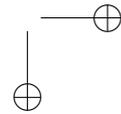
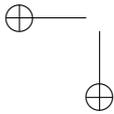
It was Alonzo; they reached the bench at practically the same moment and sat down on it, one at either end. "I believe I have seen you at the hotel," Mr. Mason said as he did so; "I am staying there. My name is Mason."

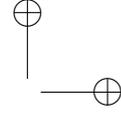
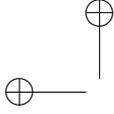
"Mine's Hill." The light fell straight down on Alonzo, who had been walking and whose blue serge coat, a trifle tight for his good shoulders, was more than a trifle warm. He took off his straw sailor and smoothed his hair on either side of the part; he gave too a little touch to his mustache. Mr. Mason had almost forgotten that a young man was so young.

"Pretty country you have around here," he said presently. "Just where does this ravine come out?" He indicated the direction from which Alonzo had apparently come in. "I haven't followed it any farther up than this."

"About a mile farther; not far from where I live," Alonzo told him.

"Then it's shorter for you than coming around by the road, I imagine. I might find a shorter way to get up to the hotel than going back to the steps. Looks pretty rough, though; I'd better try it first by daylight."





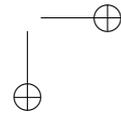
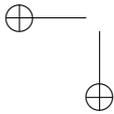
“There’s a path,” Alonzo told him, “only there don’t many people use it. It goes right up through that clump of cedars – excuse me for pointing – and comes out by the power-house and the annex.”

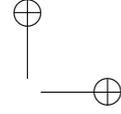
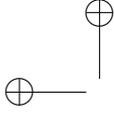
“I see,” Mr. Mason said. “Looks steep from here. I’ll try it some time when the weather is a little cooler. Does it ever get any hotter than this?”

“Not much – not around here. In town it’s hotter,” Alonzo told him.

“Or down the river, I suppose. I was talking earlier in the evening to a man from Louisiana – Mr. Dupree; he got in this afternoon, and I believe he’s going back tomorrow or the next day, but even so he says it’s worth the trip – it’s so much cooler here than it is down on his plantation. Everything is a matter of comparison, I suppose. Well –” he stood up – “I’m glad to have met you, Mr. Hill.”

A word to the wise, he thought as he walked away; but Alonzo was another matter; had he used words enough? He looked back when he came to the bend in the ravine and thought he saw a white straw hat. He couldn’t see a blue serge suit at night, and Alonzo’s face might still be turned toward the clump of cedars that the path ran through. Excuse me for pointing.





“As quiet as a millpond,” Mr. Mason said. “Othello left yesterday, and Miss Giddings was too busy even to notice it. A lot of new people coming, I believe.”

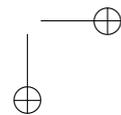
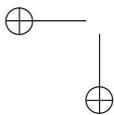
“Do you think Alonzo realizes what might have happened if you hadn’t told him Mr. Dupree was there?” Alice asked.

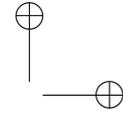
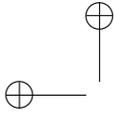
“What might?”

“Why, he might have come up to the hotel that night, maybe, and he would have been sure to come the next morning –”

“And been challenged to a duel? Just what is it we have all been expecting – swords, pistols, horsewhips?”

“All the same, even Mamma admits now that the letter might have been important. She is glad I told you. But we don’t want anybody else to





find out about it. She says she hopes Mrs. Dupree will have a little more sense. We are both awfully obliged to you for taking all that trouble," she added, formally.

"You are both awfully welcome," he said, smiling. "It was a pleasure, I assure you. Meddling in other people's business always is a pleasure, don't you think so?"

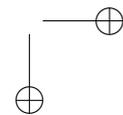
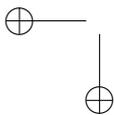
It was Sunday morning again, with a delightful change in the weather; even Thor noticed it and kept running off investigating things instead of lying in one place with his tongue hanging out. "You don't think the ground is too damp?" Mr. Mason asked her when they came to their tree. "I would hate for you to spoil that dress; I believe it's the prettiest one of all."

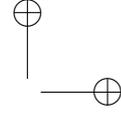
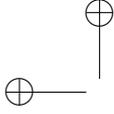
"Anyhow it will wash," she said, spreading it around her on the grass.

"Aren't you ever afraid, coming out in new dresses all the time, that you might frighten off some really deserving young man who knew he would never be able to pay for them?"

Alice laughed. "Maybe if he got to be very deserving I could tell him how little they cost, when I make them myself."

He laid his hand on the edge of blue muslin lying near him. "Clothes are a wonderful thing. Sometimes they strike me as being more wonderful





than anything else about people; this dress for instance: I am as certain as I can be that if I am alive fifty years from now I will see it just as plainly as I do this minute.”

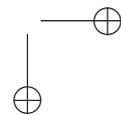
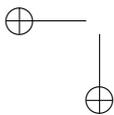
“Then you aren’t going to change it in the meanwhile, the way you told me you are always doing with the past?”

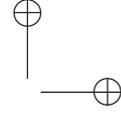
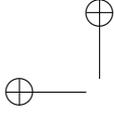
He took his hand away, but not his eyes. “It won’t be the past,” he said, and added rather suddenly: “I had another letter from home yesterday.”

“From the battlements at Elsinore?”

“Yes. I wish you knew my father. He is one of the things I want to show you. There are really quite a lot of them; I keep thinking up new ones all the time. I want to show you poor old Charleston. It’s not a coming town, as they say about this one; it’s going, I’m afraid; but I know you would like the water, especially in the evening, from the Battery. Yesterday I was looking at the Mississippi – I can see a little of it from one of the windows in my office – and I said to myself: ‘Just think; she has never seen any blue water in her life.’ I want to be the one to show it to you. I want to catch a little fishing boat with white sails and let you hold it in your hand.”

She looked at him, not quite sure whether to smile or not, and decided not to.





“Of course I know you are going to Europe and see everything,” he said, “but I want to show you mine first.”

“I would like to see the battlements at Elsinore,” she said, in the voice that went straight to the bottom where all his longings lay.

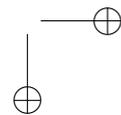
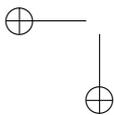
“Oh yes, my father’s letter – may I read you a little of it?” He took it from his breast pocket and unfolded the closely written sheets.

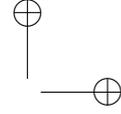
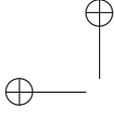
“Is it very hot there – worse than here?” Alice asked him.

“There’s a breeze; you see, we are only about sixteen miles from the ocean. My father doesn’t mind the heat, but this summer there has been a lot of rain, and it is what he calls the blessing of fecundity that he would pray to have withdrawn. He says assisting nature, as people call it, in a place like that is like assisting an express train when you are really trying to keep it from running over you.”

“I know what it’s like here when we have a wet summer,” Alice said. “The darkies say it’s hard to keep the cotton in sight, on account of the weeds.”

“But there it’s not only weeds; it’s bushes – trees, even the beautiful ones with white flowers; it’s veils of Spanish moss – all the lovely vistas blotted out, my father says. Sometimes he feels that it is hopeless. He says: ‘Whatever people mean by Southern





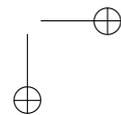
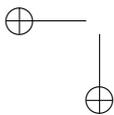
ease and indolence, they are what it took to create the thing that used to be here. The question is, can energy, economy, business ability, restore it? The work without the dreaming would bring back something, but not that.' It's an interesting idea, Miss Alice – that modern methods must inevitably create a modern atmosphere; certainly they do not encourage visions."

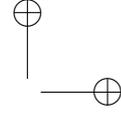
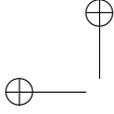
She looked at him with serious eyes. "Did you, or your father either, ever think that maybe you might fall in love with a girl who had a lot of money and who would —"

"I know," he broke in; "I've heard of girls like that; I've even seen a few of them. They drive out from Charleston occasionally, in search of romance; they want to marry somebody and restore something. Restore it to what? To an architect's dream, I suppose. 'Burned, but not restored, thank God!' A man we knew said that. Do you know, Miss Alice, I wouldn't even trust myself in there with a million dollars? I would almost hesitate to trust my father."

"But it must be so lovely the way it is – the way you describe it – all veiled in moss that way, with the white flowers. Why does so much have to be done to it?" she asked him.

"Because it has to be not only lovely but livable. It's the difference between love in a dream and love





in reality; which is a bigger difference than you would be likely to imagine. I can't have it waving veils at me and being elusive and mysterious; I've got to have it for me; I've got to get in there with an ax." He folded the letter up and put it back in his pocket. "Here, where the world is quiet – do you remember 'The Garden of Proserpine'?"

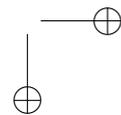
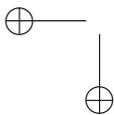
*I watch the green field growing  
For reaping folk and sowing,  
For harvest-time and mowing –*

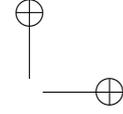
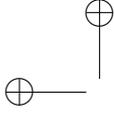
And what do you want to watch?" he asked her.

She shook her head; she was still watching his face.

"Of course the time my father was thinking about is the time when the life, there, was – I don't say what God intended; I have my doubts about that; but at least what the place intended. It is a legend, and a son of the soil is supposed to stick up for it, in a legendary sort of way; but it is not what I catch the seven-thirty car for in the morning and go through all the other motions of being a business man. The thing I want to have back is something I have had already; something I haven't any idea of not having; and certainly it's the only thing I would ever want to offer to anybody else."

"Offer to show it to them, do you mean – 'here is the kitchenette'?" she asked him, smiling.



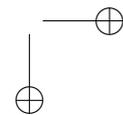
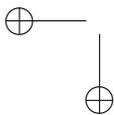


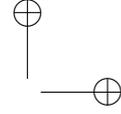
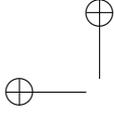
“Offer to share it – offer it to a girl to come and live in,” he said. He looked at her meditatively. “When I think about the kitchen at home, and how it used to look to me after I began going off to school and coming home always starved to death – and especially how it used to smell – Did you ever think very much about smells? I like them better than almost anything. Kitchen odors. They are terribly looked down upon these days. I suppose because in a flat your nose is practically in the kitchen all the time; but at home they would draw you from anywhere. Your mother’s kitchen is like that; I smelled the gingerbread in the yard when we were starting for our walk. Asking a girl to leave that kind of home for a slice of a house in town – or to leave these druidical oaks for the sidewalk variety, or maybe no oaks at all – would be like asking a queen to abdicate. I don’t see how a man would go about it –

*Come live with me and be my love  
And we will all the pleasures prove –*

A gas stove and a can-opener and sending all our things to the laundry. You don’t call the clothes hanging out over the grass ‘things’; it’s the washing, it’s beautiful.”

Alice laughed. “I’ve always liked the country better too; not on account of the washing, though;

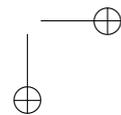
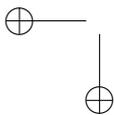


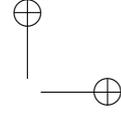
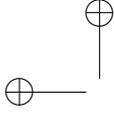


I never thought about that. And I don't know what a flat looks like; that's another one of the things I have yet to see."

"Well, that's one I am not going to show you," he said. "At least not if I can help it."

She laughed again with perfect unconcern; either she didn't realize she was being made love to, after a fashion, or she thought the fashion was funny. It was funny; it wouldn't do; the first thing he knew, he would spoil something, either for her or for himself. He was continually being tempted to break up that way she had of looking at him – to make some kind of a splash, a ripple, in her clear gaze. But it wouldn't do; seventeen was too young for any but the most straightforward dealings, and she was young even for seventeen. Young and surprisingly uninformed. A girl of her intelligence, and her class – it was a word he made rather a point of avoiding; he did not like what people meant by it, or tried not to mean; as a thought, however, it meant something very definite, as definite as he was himself and as familiar – and he had to accept the fact that a girl like Alice should know a good deal more than Alice knew, about more things. Young and ignorant, then; which left beauty still to be reckoned with, and love. He had fallen in love with her right away, he supposed – from the day of the dog fight; and he

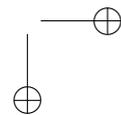
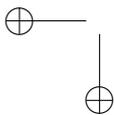


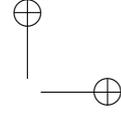
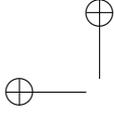


could not remember a time when beauty was not a thing he had to reckon with; he had embarrassed his mother by staring at her friends when he was too young to feel embarrassment himself. His manners had necessarily improved since then, but psychologically he had continued to stare. He did not have to stare at Alice, however; he could see her with his eyes shut; her effects were all for clearness. That was why he wanted to show her things, to tell her things – to quote her things; it was not to enlighten her, but them. – And he who never saw you has lived and died a fool. He wanted to quote her that.

Well, there it was. And there was the House of Usher crumbling about his ears, and his mother and father and the Cotton Exchange. While he was seeing things clearly, he must keep his eyes on these.

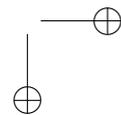
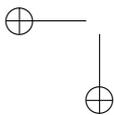
It was more than a week before Miss Norma had time to come up and tell them how relieved she had been to have Mr. Dupree go away as he did – after coming as he had also done. “I made sure somebody had put a flea in his ear, but it seems to have been just a business trip. He said he didn’t know about it himself till a few hours before he started. The way it’s turned out, I’m glad he didn’t tell her. It scared her, but she ought to be scared.”

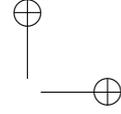
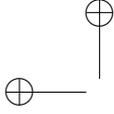




“Something certainly should have happened to bring her to her senses,” Mrs. Macgowan said. “Maybe now she will let that poor silly boy alone.”

Miss Norma did not say anything. Alice, who was sewing, looked up just in time to see a curious change take place in her expression; curious, yet familiar. She had seen it all her life in all sorts of faces, and it always meant that people knew something they were not going to say while she was there. It was exactly like having a door shut in her own face. Her mother did it too; maybe not about the same things; all kinds of things could be behind that same door. Alice had always taken it for granted that a time would come when they would stop doing it – when they would just go on with what they had to say and not be so mysterious about it. If she was not supposed to know things, then why had she been allowed to read all the books in the house? Books were an open garden; she had heard her father say that; you must trust a child as you would trust a bee. And certainly by the time a girl got through reading Shakespeare and Byron, there wasn't anything she didn't know, or couldn't imagine. Only when it came to real people you naturally stopped short of some things. It would make you sick if you had to think of them in connection with anybody you knew – except darkies, of course; they were different. Surely Miss

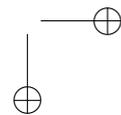
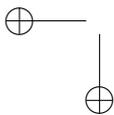


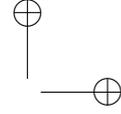
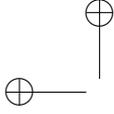


Norma didn't believe Mrs. Dupree and Alonzo were behaving the way they did? And yet what else was there to be keeping from her? "Don't you think," she asked her mother, "that I could do this hem on the machine?" The machine was upstairs, and she wanted to go upstairs; she wanted to get away. She felt exactly as she did that time when the man asked her to have dinner with him. It took all the interest out of everything. It kept her from caring what happened to anybody.

"That's what I mean when I say she has so little sense," her mother explained after Miss Norma had gone. "When a woman has no discretion and starts people to talking about her, they never know where to stop. As far as her reputation is concerned, there is very little to choose between being bad and being silly."

But whichever Mrs. Dupree had chosen, Alice did not want to talk about her now; not to her mother or to anybody. She hoped the subject would never come up again when she was with Mr. Mason. Not because she thought she was wicked; the idea of right and wrong had not presented itself; in rejecting Mrs. Dupree and her behavior without even knowing what her behavior had been, she was guided by nothing more ethical than distaste, which is not guidance enough in most cases. Sin is a complicated business, but too much thought





has gone into it for even the pure or the fastidious – whichever Alice was – to be confronted with it and refuse to think at all.

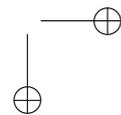
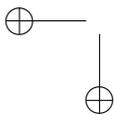
It was early in the morning a few days after Miss Norma’s visit – long before breakfast and really not very long after daylight – when she was awakened by the sound of screaming. Melvina was running through the yard calling somebody. It was her Lawd Jesus – Alice in her nightgown at the window could hear her now – “Oh my Lawd Jesus, he done shot Mr. ’Lonzer, he done kilt him daid.”

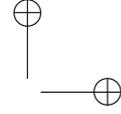
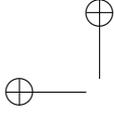
“Stop that noise, Melvina” – her father was at his window too – “and come over here where I can talk to you.”

Melvina came, but talking to her was another matter; all they could do, from whatever door or window, was to listen while the noise went on.

“How do you know all this?” Mr. Macgowan asked when he thought there was a chance of being answered. “You say it happened at the hotel, and you have not been to the hotel.”

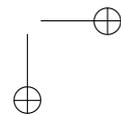
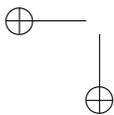
She was on her way there now, Melvina said. “One of the gen’lemen done come out to tell his ma, an’ a doctor from the hotel done come to tell her Mr. ’Lonzer was plumb daid, an’ they was fixin’ to bring him home – yes, Lawd, to bring him home!”

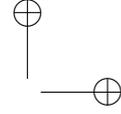
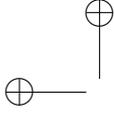




“She is certainly making the most of it, but it may still be a mistake,” Mr. Macgowan said. He was dressed now and prepared to follow Melvina on her way to the hotel. They could hear her still, as she went across the lawn, waking the morning to a grief that was not hers. The rest of them were dressing, and Annie Sue had already made the fire in the kitchen stove and was cooking breakfast. The smell of the coffee coming in at the window through which the screams had come seemed like waking from a dreadful dream, Alice thought. Melvina’s tale could not be true and the morning go on just the same.

But it was true. Her father told them briefly that Mr. Dupree had come back unexpectedly again, at night this time, and found his wife with Alonzo down in the ravine – “by that last spring.” He had taken a pistol from his pocket and shot him – killed him instantly, her father said. He didn’t tell them much after that; they only found out later that Mr. Dupree hadn’t done anything to Mrs. Dupree except to take her back to the hotel; and after that it seemed he hadn’t tried to run away; he had just waited at the hotel until the sheriff came. It was all terrible, but so strange too that it was hard to realize anything except the strangeness. Alice wondered how her father could be so quiet about it; and even Mr. Dupree

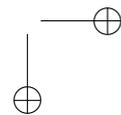
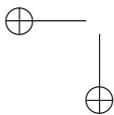


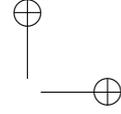
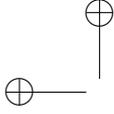


had apparently been quiet. Melvina, as far as she could see, had been the only one who seemed to realize that something terrible had happened. Her mother was quieter than anybody else. She had gone to Mrs. Hill's as soon as she finished breakfast and didn't know when she would be back, she said. That was something they always hated to hear her say; it sounded so endless. What would be happening there at Mrs. Hill's? Would their mother be crying?

If she had been, it was not enough to show. "So many people began coming that I thought I wouldn't stay this time," she said when they saw her drive in and went out to meet her. "I can go back; and I do want to send her some more flowers. I cut all the pretty ones I could find in her garden; hardly any thing is blooming now – especially anything white. I wish people didn't have that idea of using nothing except white flowers for a funeral. It's all right for a wedding."

They wanted her to tell them more about Mrs. Hill than that she didn't have enough flowers. It seemed strange that she would care about anything like that. They didn't know much about what happened when people died – even in the ordinary way. Naturally she wouldn't be screaming like Melvina, but their mother sounded as if she were just the way she always was. And Alonzo –





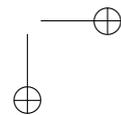
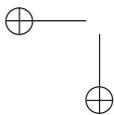
“Where is Alonzo now?” Alice asked. Her voice was shaking a little in spite of all she could do to make it sound as if Alonzo might be just anywhere.

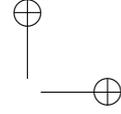
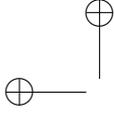
“I didn’t see Alonzo,” her mother said. “I sat with Mrs. Hill in her room awhile, and then I cut the flowers and put them in water and talked to some of the people – the ones I knew – and then came on home. One of you go see if Annie Sue can have lunch a little earlier. We must have eaten breakfast before six o’clock.”

Late that evening, after the sun had been off of the garden long enough for the flowers to stiffen up, they went out and cut everything white they could find, and even put in some pale pink roses.

“We will put them in something deep and leave them out where the dew will fall on them,” Mrs. Macgowan said. “Then in the morning, if you want to, you may both drive over and take them to her. The funeral will be in the afternoon, but there will be so many people, and it may last a long time, I think it will be better if you take the flowers and give them to her yourselves, so she will know you came, and then not go to the funeral.”

The cedar trees looked actually black against the morning sky when they drove in and stopped under one of them in front of the house. There were two or three other vehicles standing in the yard, their horses hitched to other trees. “Do you





think we had better tie Kitty?" Alice asked. "We will only be just a few minutes."

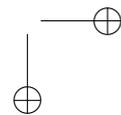
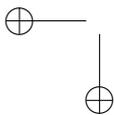
"I am not going in," Rose said; she was still holding the reins. "You get out and I will hand you the flowers."

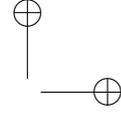
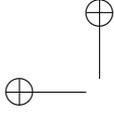
"But Mamma wanted us –" Alice protested though she had obeyed and was already standing on the grass.

Rose handed her the big flat basket. "Aren't they beautiful with the dew still on them like that?" she said. "You can tell her that I came too, but I had to stay in the buggy because Kitty doesn't like to stand." Alice turned with the basket in her arms and went up the steps. The front door was open and a lady she did not know was standing in the hall. "How beautiful!" she said, and started to take the basket.

"My mother sent them," Alice said; "she told me to give them to Mrs. Hill –" The door to Mrs. Hill's room on one side of the hall stood open too.

"In here, dear," the lady said, and opened the one into the parlor. Mrs. Hill was there, sitting beside Alonzo. She got up and took the flowers and said something, but Alice was looking at Alonzo; she had not expected to see him again. She would have known right away that he was not asleep, but if she had not known that he was dead, she would





have thought something wonderful had happened to him.

Mrs. Hill took a white rose out of the basket and laid it beside him. "My boy looks beautiful, doesn't he?" she said, looking down at him; and then she said in a different voice: "The Lord gave, but it is not the Lord who hath taken away."

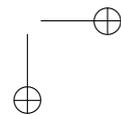
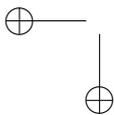
Alice got back in the buggy with no idea that she was going to cry. She was feeling strange, but not the least bit sad. It was when Rose turned around and started to drive out, and she saw Alonzo's horse in the lot, looking over the fence toward the house, and the buckboard standing by the stable with the shafts on the ground, that her throat began to feel queer; and then before she knew it she was sobbing so she couldn't even answer when Rose asked her what was the matter.

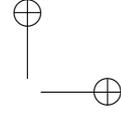
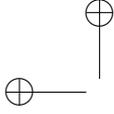
"Take my handkerchief, then, and don't try to tell me till we get home," Rose said. "But I do wish you would stop. Anybody who saw you coming away from the house like that would think you must have been in love with him yourself."

There was something in this, but not enough. The tears still flowed. "You didn't see him," Alice said.

"Didn't he look just like he was asleep?" Rose asked.

Alice shook her head.



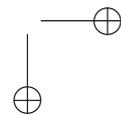
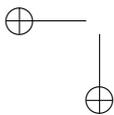


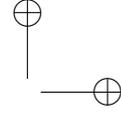
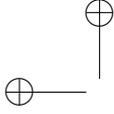
“I expect he looked more like a statue – the way Rob Roy did. You remember how we said he looked exactly like the statue of a dog, lying with his head on his paws that way?”

Alice wiped her eyes. “But Rob Roy looked like a statue of himself; as if he hadn’t changed a bit by dying. You were sure if he could come back he would be just the same. Alonzo didn’t look that way at all; you knew the minute you saw him that he would never even want to come back.”

“Well, anyhow, don’t start crying again. Maybe we ought to be glad, then. I’m just going to pull off to one side and stop – until you do. You have no idea how you look.” Rose drew up in the shade of a convenient tree and inspected her sister with disapproval. “I believe everybody would have been better off if the hotel had never been built and the springs were the way they used to be,” she said.

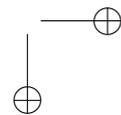
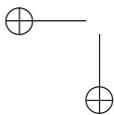
The way they used to be little bubbles in the sand. And that last spring – Alice remembered the day they discovered it, practically hidden in the grass. She remembered how Rose looked that summer, and Roddy; and of course she must have changed as much as they had. If anybody had told her then what was going to happen right there where they were wading, how would she have felt? Naturally it would have scared her; she would have thought about pistol-shots and blood and revenge;

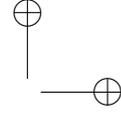
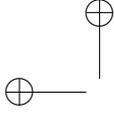




it would have been all clear in her mind like a story, but she would not have been the least bit miserable over it. Rose was probably right about their being happier the way they were. And yet even if they could go back, Alice was sure she didn't want to go. It would just all be to learn over again – the things she knew now about people and the way they acted, and how different it seemed to you after they were dead. Alonzo couldn't have looked like that if he had been bad and low-down, the way she had been thinking he was; and maybe Mrs. Dupree was not either. It was still something she couldn't understand, but she knew now she didn't have to feel so sick over it and so ashamed if anybody mentioned it. It was a tremendous relief – that part of it was; though of course the rest of it was as bad as ever. And she certainly couldn't go into it with Rose.

Having a thing like that happen would be bad for the hotel, people said. Mr. and Mrs. Deering were worried when so much about it came out in the newspapers; but it seemed to Alice that it was having the opposite effect, for the first few weeks at least. There was more of a crowd for dinner in the evening than there used to be, and none of the people who were staying there left on account of it. Except the Duprees of course; they had all gone home the next day. Mr. Dupree too,

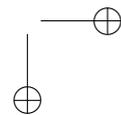
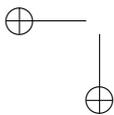


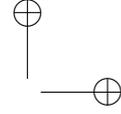
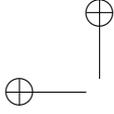


though he would have to come back for the legal formalities, which couldn't be anything very bad, from the way everybody spoke of them. Not as bad as legal proceedings, which would have been expensive. Nobody even mentioned hanging Mr. Dupree. Alice had heard of the unwritten law and was now told that it was for cases like this that it had not been written.

Another thing that had turned out different from what she would have expected was Miss Norma. It was exactly as if she had never said anything bad about Mrs. Dupree, or wanted anything to happen to her or Alonzo either; and now that it had, she seemed to be sorrier than anybody. Mr. Mason said he didn't know how that poor woman, or the children, could have got along without Miss Norma; she had just done everything for them. She was quiet all of a sudden, too. She hardly talked to anybody about what had happened.

"Tragedy is supposed to have that effect on people," Mr. Mason said. "The last act – when somebody has to pay for everything, whether he was to blame for all of it or not, makes the audience feel pretty sober for a while. But unfortunately it doesn't last. The human situation, Miss Alice, seems to call for a lot of sacrifices. Something, somewhere, has always got to be settled with. We talk about forgiving people for their misdeeds, be-





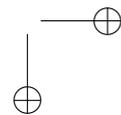
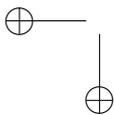
cause they are dead, or because we are Christians. If we were good consistent pagans we would know better than that. We would probably put a stone or an altar of some description down at that last spring to remind the passer-by that a debt had been paid there, a part of the universal obligation.”

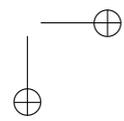
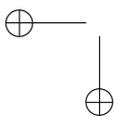
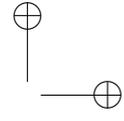
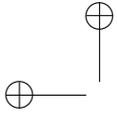
The next day Alice heard Melvina talking to Annie Sue out on the back porch and it reminded her of what Mr. Mason had said about being a pagan. Melvina said nobody drank the water out of that spring any more.

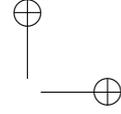
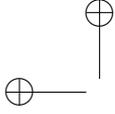
“What is that one for?” Annie Sue asked her. “Your kidneys or jus’ your liver?”

“Whatever it was for, it ain’t for nothin’ now. They tells me the water’s done changed.”

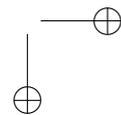
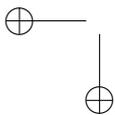
“Sho’ nuff? Which one is them with them complaints goin’ to drink out of now?” Annie Sue inquired.

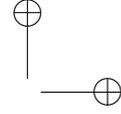
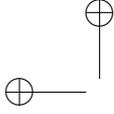






The summer was almost gone now; the leaves had not turned, but there was a gold wash over everything. Last year at this time Mr. Deering had begun to talk of closing the hotel, but this year he was thinking of keeping it open until the fall. Not wide open, maybe; he might reduce his staff, Miss Norma said, but he thought that after what had happened it would be a bad idea to shut up too tight. There wasn't anything lonelier-looking than a summer resort with nobody in it; and besides, there were a good many people who liked the country better in the fall than any other time of the year. "I told him I thought I knew one he could count on staying," Miss Norma said, looking at Alice very much in her old manner, and Alice looked back, smiling very much in hers.



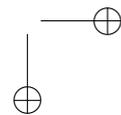
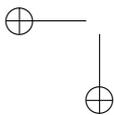


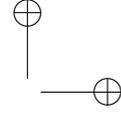
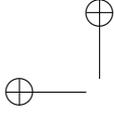
“I think it is exceedingly sensible of Mr. Deering to do that,” Mrs. Macgowan said. “He can have big wood fires in the evening and make it look cheerful and homelike. I know Colonel Bodley would enjoy it.”

“And if Mr. Mason stays, I tell you somebody else that won’t be leaving in a hurry,” Miss Norma said, “and that’s Miss Kitty Kirkman and her mother. She may not be ahead of you in looks, Alice, but they tell me she’s one of the richest girls in Nashville, and going to be a lot richer when her grandmother dies; so you better keep your eye on her.”

“I think she’s perfectly beautiful,” Alice said. “I was trying to describe the way she looked in that yellow dress to Mamma. I never thought about yellow being becoming to a blonde, but it made her look gold all over. Do you suppose Mr. Mason knows about her having so much money?”

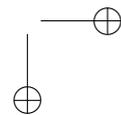
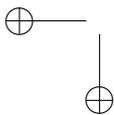
“I can’t see any use in her hiding a thing like that from him, when she’s doing everything else she can to catch him,” Miss Norma said. “Of course, she’s too well brought up to brag about it, but it’s easy to see they have always been used to everything; and so has he until lately, I suppose. And there’s one thing I can say, to her or to anybody who asks me, and that is that I never saw a more perfect gentleman in my life than William Barnwell

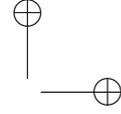
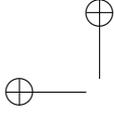




Mason.” Miss Norma was right back where she used to be.

Miss Kitty Kirkman and her mother had been at the hotel about a week now; they had been out in Colorado all summer and were on their way back home. They were much the nicest people – ladies at least – who had come yet. They were exactly the kind Alice had expected would come, that first summer when she used to walk down practically every day, before the hotel opened, and sit on the veranda, or in the parlor, and imagine the guests. Mrs. Kirkman must have been beautiful too when she was young. She wore very thin black, with marvelous diamonds. Miss Norma thought she was in mourning, but so far she had not found out for whom. Not Mr. Kirkman; he had been dead too long and, besides, Miss Kitty didn’t ever wear anything the least bit dark. Her dresses were all colors and every one becoming to her complexion. Her hair was as light as Rose’s, almost, and brighter. She was prismatic; Alice heard her father say that one evening when they were down at the hotel and she was dressed in pale green. But the yellow dress was the most becoming of any; it reminded Alice of the Grimms’ fairy tale where the girl was caught in the shower of gold. She had a lovely way of speaking, too – and spoke a good deal, Alice had to admit. The





minute anybody else stopped talking, she began, as if silence would be impolite. She probably knew foreign languages too; they had been to Europe twice, she told Alice once when she was little, and again summer before last. It would be wonderful to hear her speak French – really speak it.

“Do you know whether she went to college too?” Alice asked Mr. Mason. “I haven’t the least idea how old she is, but she’s entirely different from the only other college girl I ever knew: Mrs. Clayton. She went to Vassar.”

Mr. Mason did not think Miss Kirkman had been to college. “She is very much educated, though; one can see that,” he said.

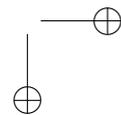
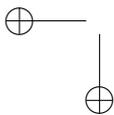
“She has studied music too,” Alice said; “she sings. Have you heard her?”

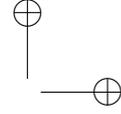
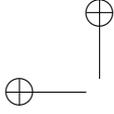
He shook his head. “We must ask her to sing for us. She and Rose can get together on that – ‘golden head by golden head’ – do you know Christina Rossetti?”

Alice looked doubtful. “I know Rossetti – but wasn’t he a man?”

“Quite right. Christina was his sister; I’ll read her to you some day.”

“I think she’s the most beautiful girl I ever saw,” Alice said earnestly.





“Not Christina Rossetti – oh, Miss Kirkman. Well, I wouldn’t say that perhaps, but I see what you mean.”

“We call her the golden girl,” Alice said – “I mean the one in the fairy tale,” she added quickly; “I wasn’t thinking about her being so rich.”

“Is she?”

Alice nodded. “Her family is. Papa used to know them when he was at school in Nashville. She is descended from one of the presidents. Was there one named Polk?”

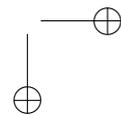
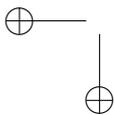
“Yes; was he rich?”

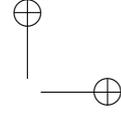
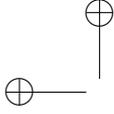
“I didn’t mean that; I meant her family was aristocratic.”

“I see,” he said. “And did she get her looks from the President too?”

She let that go as a joke, but was immediately serious again. “I don’t know that she’s what you call descended, exactly; he may not have had any children –”

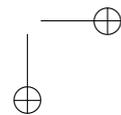
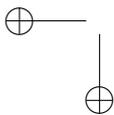
“But related enough for aristocracy; I see,” he said again. “What I don’t see is why you are making it so clear to me. If you are trying to make me admire Miss Kirkman more than I do already, you don’t have to bother; I expect I go about as far as anybody along that line. Or maybe it’s not me you are thinking about; maybe it’s you; you may be trying to get rid of me. Are you?”

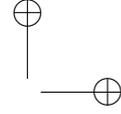
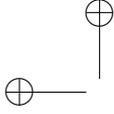




She waited a little before she laughed at that – to be sure; and he went on: “If you are, then come out and tell me so, and don’t try to buy me off with rich families and presidents’ granddaughters and things like that.” There he was again – throwing his pebbles into the clear pool. It wouldn’t do. “That’s a joke, Miss Alice (that’s a joke, my darling; I know you are thinking about those battlements at Elsinore); I’m really as proud of Miss Kirkman as you are,” he said. “A girl like that does a lot to lift the average. I don’t mean the hotel average; I mean the human average – the Southern average in particular. But if we have to account for her, it seems to me her mother is all we need. She is charming, don’t you think so?”

Alice had known her father would say that, but it surprised her for Mr. Mason to say it. She was not quite sure what a young man meant by “charming,” applied to a lady who was not young. Naturally her father would enjoy talking to Mrs. Kirkman because they knew the same people in Nashville and had been to so many of the same places in Europe. She pronounced their names exactly the way he and Colonel Bodley did, without remembering how they were spelled – Bois de Boulogne – Versailles – but she never tried to describe them; it was just as if she were telling something funny that had happened in Denver,

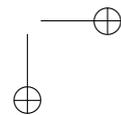
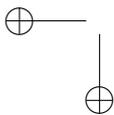


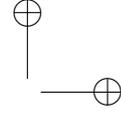
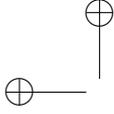


say, or even in Nashville; and Mr. Mason made her laugh by asking her absurd questions. Maybe it was really true that everybody liked to listen to Mrs. Kirkman more than they did to Miss Kitty.

The moonlight in October was wonderful, and the nights still warm, and by that time they had become so well acquainted with each other that Mrs. Kirkman and Kitty – they called her Kitty now – would come up almost every evening with Mr. Mason and Colonel Bodley, and they would sit out where they could really enjoy it instead of on the veranda at the hotel, where Mr. Deering could not be induced to turn off a single light, Mrs. Kirkman said. “I actually believe the man is afraid of ghosts,” she said, but Alice knew from the way she said it that nobody had told her anything. “Or maybe it’s just flirtations,” Mrs. Kirkman went on. “That ravine is lit up like Broadway; not a kissing corner anywhere. What has happened to romance in this end of the state? We still have it in middle Tennessee. Did they use to have tally-ho parties out on the Granny White pike when we were young, Mr. Macgowan? It’s been so long I can’t remember.”

Alice looked at her, leaning back in the low chair Mr. Mason had put out on the lawn for her, right under the moon. Her neck and arms were white, like marble, through her thin dress, and





her diamonds sparkled more than they had ever done. She was being charming. "What a night!" she said. "In such a night as this, when the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees – which one of you can 'out-night' me?"

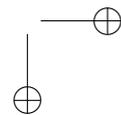
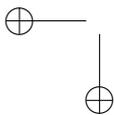
"In such a night," Mr. Macgowan said, "Troilus methinks mounted the Trojan walls and sighted his soul toward the Grecian tents – go on, Bodley."

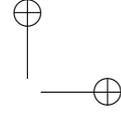
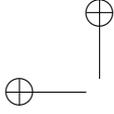
"Where Cressid lay that night," Colonel Bodley said. "In such a night did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew and saw the lion's shadow ere himself and ran dismayed away."

"Mr. Mason!" Mrs. Kirkman looked at him reproachfully.

"In such a night stood Dido with a willow in her hand upon the wild sea banks and waft her love to come again to Carthage," Mr. Mason said. It was like a game.

Kitty didn't like to sing at the hotel, but there in the moonlight all they had to do was to get her started. Rose tried playing her accompaniments loud enough for her to sing without having to come inside, but it didn't go very well, besides being hard on Rose, who, too, naturally wanted to be outside. Then Mrs. Kirkman remembered about the guitar. "Go get it, Kitty; you remember which trunk it is in."



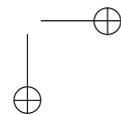
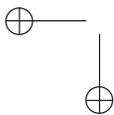


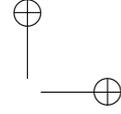
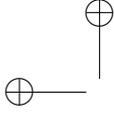
“Nobody wants to hear me that bad, even if you knew where the key was,” Kitty said; but Mr. Mason pulled her up from the steps where she was sitting and told her to come on. “If you can’t find the key, I’ll bring the trunk,” he said.

When they came back he had the guitar slung across his shoulder by a wide ribbon, and standing there in the moonlight they looked exactly like something in an old picture, or a play – Gaily the troubadour touched his guitar. Kitty didn’t know that song, but she seemed to know almost everything else anybody had ever heard of.

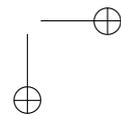
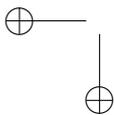
When she stopped singing and they went back to the hotel it was almost midnight, but neither Alice nor Rose wanted to go in. It was the most beautiful evening they could ever remember. “I would rather sing like that than do anything in the world,” Alice said. “Of course you would rather play, and I don’t blame you, because you are a really gifted musician; there’s nothing to keep you from being famous. With her it’s just an accomplishment, but it must be so wonderful to have even a few people feel about you the way we were all feeling about her. Of course a lot of it was the way she looked; nobody could take their eyes off her.”

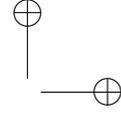
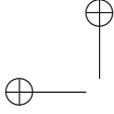
“Of course you didn’t notice where Mr. Mason’s eyes were,” Rose said.





The next afternoon Alice lay in the hammock trying to keep awake over Christina Rossetti and finding it difficult because of the night before. Even after she went to bed she had stayed awake – on purpose, because she was trying to hold on to things, to keep them from slipping into the past. But it couldn't be the past; Mr. Mason had said that about remembering her blue dress, and that was how she felt about last night; she didn't want it ever to be the past. But of course it kept getting more so every minute – the moonlight and the music and the way everything had looked – and the daylight put the finishing touch on it. Maybe if anyone went blind and didn't have the outside changes to contend with, it would be possible to keep the feeling of enchantment longer. She closed her eyes; she could hear Kitty's voice – "Moon of the summer night" – and see her sitting on the steps with her guitar. She opened them and saw her coming across the lawn from the hotel; so that was the end of that. She jumped up and went to meet her, leaving Christina in the hammock for the cat to die with. Coming across the lawn was much shorter than going around by the gate. Mr. Mason always came that way, and so had Mr. Clayton, but it was only recently that the ladies had been doing it. Mr. Mason had found he could slip one of the rails out enough for them to get





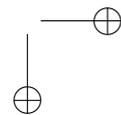
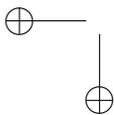
through the fence without catching their dresses. He and Mr. Clayton vaulted over it; at least they did when there was anybody to see them. Alice thought perhaps they climbed it when there wasn't. Naturally a man would never go through a hole in the fence.

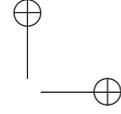
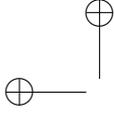
"Are there still some muscadines in there?" Kitty asked as they walked past the grapevine swing in the edge of the woods. "Mr. Mason wanted to shake some down for us last night in the moonlight, but Mother thought it was too late."

"We can see if there are any we can get." Alice veered off from the path – for it was a path now. "You really can't shake them down, though; you have to chunk them; and I doubt if either of us can throw high enough."

They couldn't; but their hats fell off and Alice's braids fell down, and it was too hot anyway, so they gave it up. "You sit in the swing," Alice said; "it holds me so I know it will hold you. I'll sit here." "Here" was the ground. "I wonder why the ripe ones always have to grow so high." She was gazing up into the tree, unconscious of how she looked to the girl in the swing, who was watching her in an unusual silence. Presently Alice caught her eyes and smiled. "I simply can't get used to your hair," Kitty said.

"Nobody can; and Rose's is even worse."





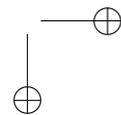
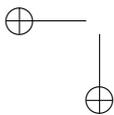
“I should think you would feel like a couple of enchanted princesses, living out here this way. And wasn’t it wonderful to have the hotel just suddenly spring up at your gate? You don’t have to bother to go after your princes. Have there been many of them, so far? You won’t tell me, though; I’ll ask Rose; little sisters have bright eyes. I saw her watching you last night – and Mr. Mason. She knows he’s in love with you, as well as I do, whether you’ve told her or not; whether he has told you or not. Has he? No – really – there’s one thing I want to ask you: are you going to marry Mr. Mason?”

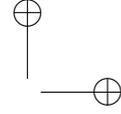
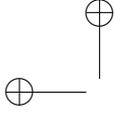
“Goodness no!” Alice said. “I’m not going to marry anybody. There are too many other things I’ve got to do before I can do that.”

“Is he going to wait for you, then? You’ll admit that he is worth waiting for. Mother and I both think he is one of the most attractive men we have seen in a long time.” She looked at Alice in silence for a minute. “How old do you think I am?” she said; “how old does Mr. Mason think I am? I don’t suppose you know, either of you. Guess.”

Alice looked at her seriously. “I’m going to guess twenty,” she said.

“Add four. That gives me one more year to go, and then I enter another class – the old-maid class. Nobody could have made me believe when I was





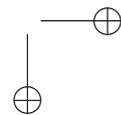
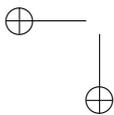
your age that I wouldn't be married by the time I was twenty-five."

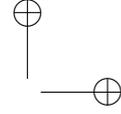
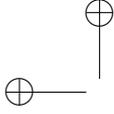
"But if you wanted to —" Alice began.

"Why didn't I? That's a long story. Have you told Mr. Mason what you just told me — about not wanting to marry anybody?"

Alice shook her head. "I haven't told him anything. And besides —" For some reason she stopped before she said that Mr. Mason couldn't marry anybody either because he had too many other things to do first. A few months ago she would have told Kitty that. She would have told her a lot of things she wouldn't tell her now. She would not have paid the slightest attention to what Miss Norma said about her trying to catch Mr. Mason; she would have treated that just as they had always treated Miss Norma's ideas about what people were trying to do. But now "Let's go on to the house," she said. "We can get Annie Sue to make us some lemonade." She got up; the sudden suspicion that the way people looked to Miss Norma might be a good deal like what they really were made her so unhappy that she had to put off thinking about it.

Kitty had not moved. "Besides what?" she asked her. "You didn't finish what you started to say about Mr. Mason." But Alice did not finish now. They picked up their wide hats and walked on





across the grass, their light skirts wide around them. "All the same," Kitty said, "I would like to be around some time when he is really making love to a girl. He has had plenty of practice; don't let anybody fool you about that."

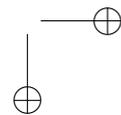
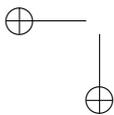


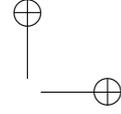
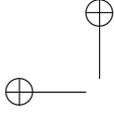
Somebody told Kitty and Mrs. Kirkman about what had happened. One of the chambermaids, when she was making up the beds, Kitty said. Alice thought it was probably Melvina; she was a maid part of the time now that she didn't have so much to do in the laundry. "Why didn't you tell us about it?" Kitty asked Alice. "You must have known the boy; what was he like?"

It was a natural question; Alice knew exactly what it meant; but she couldn't seem to think of any natural way to answer it. "He was one of the neighbors," she said, which was not an answer at all, but Kitty didn't seem to notice it. "And what were the Duprees like? Were they really nice people? The maid sounded as if they were the grandest things on earth, but she must have been terribly ordinary, whether he was or not."

"Mamma thought she didn't have very good sense; I mean that she was silly," Alice said.

"All the same, it's about as romantic as anything I ever heard of; it's like Francesca da Rimini. Did





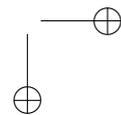
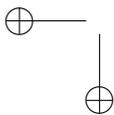
you ever see that play? The children of course make a difference; were there really four of them?"

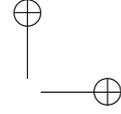
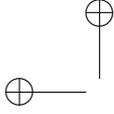
Alice nodded without speaking.

"Maybe you don't like to talk about it," Kitty said. "It must have been a great shock to everybody, and naturally the hotel people don't like to have it mentioned. We can see now why we have to live in a blaze of electricity. Was Mr. Mason here then? One of you must show me which spring it was. The maid said there was a path that led down to it from the back of the hotel, and she used to go that way."

Alice could see that as far as Kitty was concerned, there was no difference between this thing that had happened – really happened – and something in a book. "Just think – only two months ago!" she said, but that didn't make it real to her, any more than history was real. It was history, when you came to think of it; it already belonged to everybody. A chambermaid making up the beds had as much right to talk about that as she would about Lincoln getting shot; or as Kitty had to talk about Francesca da Rimini.

That afternoon when she went out to the hammock, Alice took Byron with her. That was the only book she could remember that had anything in it about Francesca da Rimini, and she couldn't remember very well what it was. At the time she





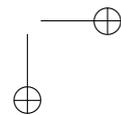
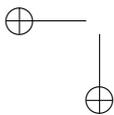
read it, it was only Byron she was interested in and it had impressed her as being less like him than his poetry usually was. She realized now that it was a translation, which no doubt accounted for the defect.

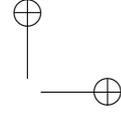
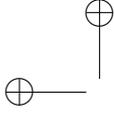
*“The land where I was born sits by the sea,”*

it began, and it took a very few minutes to read all that Francesca had said for herself; but there were footnotes giving various other bits of information. Alice saw why Mrs. Dupree had reminded Kitty of her, but it was also plain that her behavior could not be accounted for on the ground that she was ordinary. The real link between the two stories was the tragedy – what Mr. Mason called the last act.

*“Love to one death conducted us along,”*

Francesca had gone on to say, by word of Byron. Something, somewhere, always has to be settled with. In this case they had both been killed, and in addition to that they had been damned, whatever that amounted to. So their situation had called for the most complete sacrifice. Alice saw better now than she did at first how a thing that was bad, or even low, could be atoned for by a fatal ending – at least for the people who were not mixed up in it; for the audience, Mr. Mason called it – so



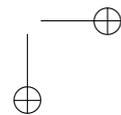
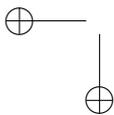


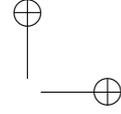
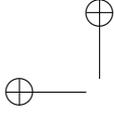
that instead of being miserable over it you could really feel a sort of strange happiness. But there was still the loss and the grief that somebody had to bear. Mrs. Hill, for instance. Nothing could take that away, unless God could. Mrs. Hill was going to have *My help cometh from the Lord* put on Alonzo's tombstone; she had been talking about it the last time they saw her; she had asked her mother if she thought it would be all right to leave off *which made heaven and earth*, because it would be so much more expensive.

The beautiful days went on, but the moon was rising later all the time. "I told Mother if she would just let me stay the moon out, I would go on back to Nashville with her," Kitty said. "I am going to be homesick for this place, Alice. When I think of you all doing everything just the same without me, I can hardly stand it."

"But it won't be just the same," Alice said. "You know that. We are going to miss you more than we ever have anybody. You were talking about how nice it was to have the hotel bring people here, but they never stay, and that is a terrible drawback; it keeps us from being quite happy even while they are here – the ones we really like, I mean."

"But Mr. Mason is going to stay; he told us that if they let anybody do it, he was going to stay until he went home for Christmas. Mother invited him

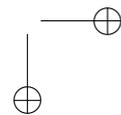
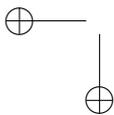


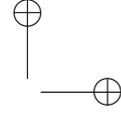
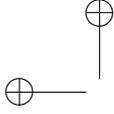


to stop and see us, either on his way there or his way back. When can you come, Alice? For a real visit, I mean. Mother says she's dying to show you off in Nashville. If we have you there, Mr. Mason will be sure to show up sooner or later. What do you really mean to do about him? Haven't you ever been in love with anybody yet?"

"Maybe a little," Alice said after thinking.

Kitty looked at her. "Of course you are awfully young; you are young even for your age – I am sure of that; but how you can sit out there night after night, with him looking at you the way he does, and even his voice being different when he says anything to you! – I think you must have a stony heart. And I suppose you think mine is just made out of mush. Mother says she can't understand what has got into me. The other day she was talking about all the things we are going to do this winter – Nashville is an awfully gay place – and all at once I began to cry. I simply can't bear the thought of going away and maybe never seeing him again. That is the plain truth and I might as well tell it – to you, I mean. Sometimes I wish I was the kind of girl who would just go ahead and tell him; not for any good it would do me, but I don't seem to care about that either; even if it did me a lot of harm I would still want him to know."





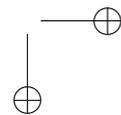
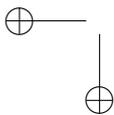
Alice was glad she had never told Kitty about the battlements at Elsinore, and about Mr. Mason's father and mother having to live in an apartment, and especially glad she had never mentioned his not being able to get married. She could see exactly how that would affect her; she would think then that the only thing to do was to tell him how she felt about him; she wanted to tell him anyhow, and that way she would have a wonderful excuse. But it would not do any good.

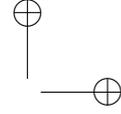
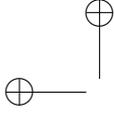
On the last evening the moon was full – a circumstance that was generally supposed to bring a rain. On this occasion, however, it had not brought even the tiniest cloud. They watched the perfected splendor swim into an empty sky, rolling fantastic lengths of shadow up, until the earth seemed empty, too, of all but light. It was almost too beautiful, especially when anybody was going away.

“Mother was too tired,” Kitty had explained when she and Mr. Mason walked up alone. “She never lets me help enough with the packing; we thought it would be better to come up in the morning to say our real good-bys.”

“And until then we will just forget there is such a word in the language,” Mrs. Macgowan said.

“Disagreeable things ought always to be put off until tomorrow,” Mr. Macgowan said. “That





may not make them any better, but think how much better it makes today!" Everybody tried to be cheerful, but nobody really felt like talking; fortunately they had refused to let Kitty pack the guitar; they would say good-by to that in the morning too.

"If you could see the way you look, sitting there like that – not to mention the way you sound," Alice told her, "you wouldn't talk about us forgetting you."

The songs had now been sung and all the family except Alice had gone in. Kitty, leaning against the post behind her, held the guitar, her fingers silently touching the strings. "You are just a dream!" Alice said.

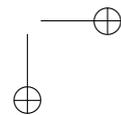
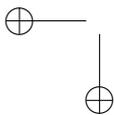
"Yes, and we all know what happens to dreams," Kitty said.

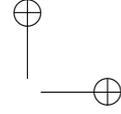
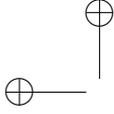
"You see, there is no way to make her believe it –" Alice looked at Mr. Mason – "unless you can."

Mr. Mason contemplated the dream and shook his head. "Something in me is all too weak to try," he said. "Suppose we just stop looking at her. The less we look at her now, the less we will notice the dark spot by that post tomorrow night."

"Vanish like a dream; go out like a light; what else can I do?" Kitty said.

"You might reappear on the darkness," Mr. Mason said; "but before we come to that, I want to





hear – I want to see – Juanita again. I even want to sing it.”

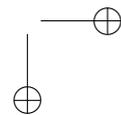
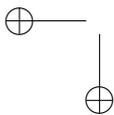
“It’s a man’s song,” Kitty said, waking the strings; “you ought to do it by yourself; I’ll help you in the high places.”

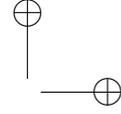
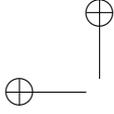
It was Alice’s favorite too – or almost her favorite; she thought their voices were lovely together:

*When in thy dreaming  
Moons like these shall shine again –*

Kitty had stopped helping him; her fingers kept on, and he kept on, pretending not to notice, but they all knew what had happened. “That’s enough for tonight,” she said in her usual voice when they got to the end. “Take it, and take me back to the hotel.” She gave him the guitar and stood up. “I’ll see you in the morning, Alice. It may be morning now; I don’t even want to know what time it is.”

Alice sat down on the steps again and watched them go off across the lawn, along the path to the fence. They went very slowly, stopping every now and then to look back, or to look at each other, or up at the moon. They were talking – maybe for the last time. Would she tell him after all? Or did she even have to tell him? He must know already how she felt. And suppose he was not that kind of





man – suppose instead of taking her back to the hotel –

*Love, who to none beloved to love again  
Remits...*

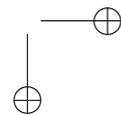
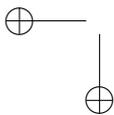
Francesca, Kitty, poor silly Mrs. Dupree – apparently they all had the same thing to contend with. It must be terrible, Alice thought; but at least it was a comfort to know that Mr. Mason was that kind of man.

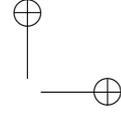
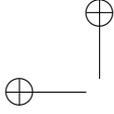


“The thing I miss the most, living in the interior this way, is the water,” Mr. Mason said. “On a day like this we ought to go down the river in my boat – the one I used to have; the one I’m going to have. But we ought to start a whole lot earlier than this. When I woke up this morning, there was a star still shining in the palest kind of a sky, out over the ravine, and I actually thought for a minute – for one breathing instant – that we could go. Do you like to get up early?”

“I never do,” Alice said. “Somebody always has to wake me.”

“Somebody is going to wake you, then, for I don’t want to go without you, and the time to start is before anything in the world has begun to stir or even to breathe. We are right on the river,





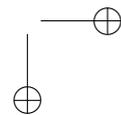
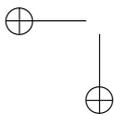
you know; the garden has steps going down into the water. My mother's flowers, that early, with no shadows anywhere, used to look as if they were painted on something – like a picture card – and the woods on both sides of the river always had a sort of uncreated look; they made me wonder not so much where I was as *when*. And I don't suppose you ever thought about it, but a river is really the only way to get into a stillness like that without breaking it. Going along a forest path makes a big commotion compared to going down a stream in a boat."

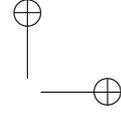
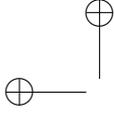
"Don't the oars make a noise?" Alice asked.

"Downstream you don't have to use them. We will be going toward the sea. Coming back we can row if we want to, or we can get somebody to row us. A sleepy world of streams. That's another poet I promised to read to you. I get really homesick once in a while for the water; I would even like to go down to the branch and wade, the way you used to do."

"Who was the poet you promised to read to me?" Alice asked him, "This one, I mean. You keep promising to read me things."

"I am going to read you all the poetry in the world, and sing you all the songs," he said. "Don't you know that?"



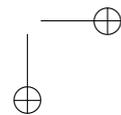
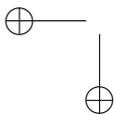


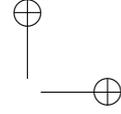
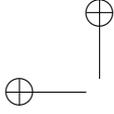
This was no pebble; this was going too far. This was going where he wanted to go. He felt his own color rising as he watched her face.

To his relief, and disappointment, all she gave him was a smile. “When are you going to begin, then? You did a little singing when Kitty was here, but you have never read me anything yet. I used to feel terribly uneducated sometimes when you were talking to her – and especially to Mrs. Kirkman.”

“Did you? I didn’t notice it – that you were feeling uneducated. What did we talk about?”

She let this go with another smile. “A girl like Kitty gives you a tremendous jolt; or maybe I mean a tremendous inspiration,” she said presently. “She has done every one of the things a girl is supposed to do: she has been to school and graduated, and been to Europe, and made her debut in Nashville, and visited in a lot of other cities. She has done everything except get married. I don’t know why she hasn’t done that; she never did tell me; but even so, every one of those things is different, a brand-new experience; compared with me, Kitty has had almost as many lives as a cat.” She was laughing but she stopped. “What I am really thinking about is me. We used to talk about it – about Rose and me living out here this way – like enchanted princesses, if you want to call it that; that





is what she called it; but all the same I know she thought it was queer, and I am sure you must think so too.”

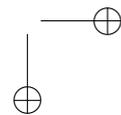
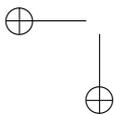
“Shall I tell you what I think?”

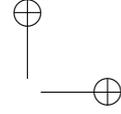
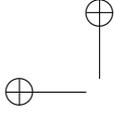
“Not until I finish,” she said. “This is something I have had on my mind ever since Kitty went away. As I say, knowing her has made a tremendous change in my outlook. At first I made up my mind to really study more – to go on and finish the Zeid, and Guizot, and all the rest of the course of reading Papa has laid out for me; but the more I think about it, the more it seems to me that all the books in the house are not going to give me what I really need at this point.”

“And what is that?” he asked without smiling. Her earnestness was a surprise to him, as her beauty continually was; the combination made him serious.

“I need more experience. I am just beginning to find out the first thing about people – about life – and I believe if the hotel had never been built out here, I might never have learned even the little I know now. I am sure I wouldn’t have learned it from books.”

“And how do people seem to you, from what you have found out? Very different from what you thought?”





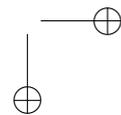
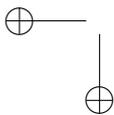
“Entirely. The only two views on the subject that I ever knew much about were my mother’s and Miss Norma’s; I have listened a lot when they were talking, and I always knew what my mother was thinking, even when she didn’t say. She always thought – we all of us did – that Miss Norma’s ideas were ‘way off; that they were terribly exaggerated. We used to laugh over them.”

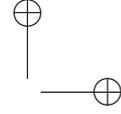
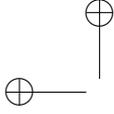
“And your mother’s?”

“That is what I have been thinking about,” Alice said. “You see, Mamma – and Papa too, for that matter – never could bear to hurt our feelings about anything; even when they read to us or told us stories, they would always tone them down. I never knew until I could read myself that the wolf really ate Red Ridinghood’s grandmother up, and the Babes in the Wood were dead and not just asleep when the birds covered them with leaves. That was one reason I was so impressed with what you told me about the tragic ending for things – do you remember? – the last act?”

“I remember,” he said.

“Well, if you hadn’t pointed that out to me, I don’t know what I would have done this summer, with people behaving the way they have. Naturally, I knew about religion, but this is different. Just what, exactly, would you call it?”





“It has been called so many things, Miss Alice. It has even been considered a substitute for religion. Poetic justice – art – it doesn’t matter, so long as it helps clear up the muddle; if it makes it easier for you to stand things the way they are – or even the way Miss Norma thinks they are.”

Alice did not comment on this. She was wondering about two or three things she wanted to tell him. Of course, he knew already that Miss Norma had been right about Mr. Dupree – about what he would do if the others had really done what she believed they had.

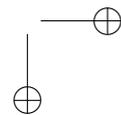
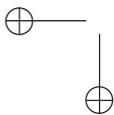
“You have heard me talk about Mr. Clayton and Paula – the Vassar girl he married, you remember?”

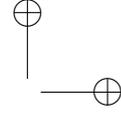
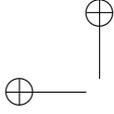
“Yes; what about them?”

“Well, Miss Norma was right about them too. She used to say he didn’t want to go back and marry Paula, although he was engaged to her. She thought – she had an idea he was in love with somebody else.”

“With somebody down here?” he asked.

She nodded. “Yes, and we thought it was the biggest joke; but after they came and we got to know her really well – after she talked to my mother about everything – I have come to the conclusion that Miss Norma was right about that too.”





“I shouldn’t be surprised if she was,” he said. “Has she been right about anything else that you know of?”

“One more thing.”

“What was it – or I suppose I had better say, who was it? I almost hope it’s about me,” he said, smiling at her. “I really do want you to know me as I am, Miss Alice, and if this is the only way –”

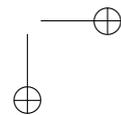
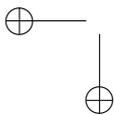
“It’s not,” she said, smiling back. “About all Miss Norma ever says about you is that you are a perfect gentleman.”

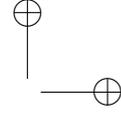
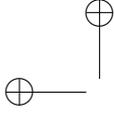
“Still, that’s something.”

“Something to be, do you mean, or for her to say?”

“But I thought you were trying to show me that they were the same thing,” he said.

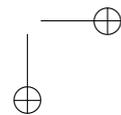
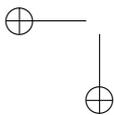
Kitty had been gone almost two weeks now, and this was the first real walk they had taken since. The rain had begun with the good-bys, after the night of the full moon, so there had been no more sitting out of doors either: a state of things that had left Alice time for a variety of reflections, which she had enjoyed setting forth at some length, now that they were back in the woods again where she always knew so much better what she wanted to say. Having now said the greater part of it, she was ready to sit still and admire the way the leaves had turned since they were there, or admire

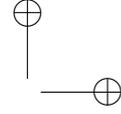
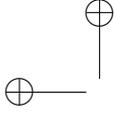




Mr. Mason as he talked to her. But he had had time for thinking too. He had been wondering how much longer he could go on this way.

There were many reasons why it was out of the question for him to ask Alice to marry him. He had known that all along; they were more conspicuous than anything about her, with the exception of her beauty, perhaps. Her youth and inexperience were two of them, and they were by no means all. If he had stopped counting them it was because he had known, equally all along, that the reason he did not ask her was only one. He could take advantage of her inexperience and rob her youth, he could borrow and could spend with all the arrogance of love, all her beauty had to give. It was what he had to give her in return that made it impossible for him to ask her anything. He could not offer her a share of the burden that had descended on his own youth; the load of debt that still appalled him, the weight of illness and age and care that constantly increased. He should have to wait for these things to change. But there again – he knew that asking her to wait, if it meant anything at all, meant something he did not want; and on the other hand to pledge himself and leave her free would only be absurd. Pledging her the last drop of his life could not hold him more than he felt himself already held, nor would it leave her free;





he knew himself too well for that; it would only give him the right to say the things that would bind her to him forever. The question before him now, as clear as she was before him herself, sitting there on the grass, was how much longer would he find it possible not to say them without the right; what compact could he make, with his spirit or his flesh, whereby he might hold his tongue? Surely there were other things to point to in the picture that he had continually before him. She would know only what he showed her; he would be a fool at this juncture to show her love.

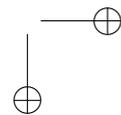
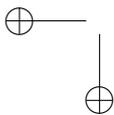
“Did you ever know an Englishman, Miss Alice?” he asked her as they were walking home.

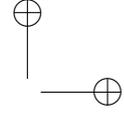
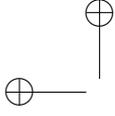
“Not that I remember. Why?”

“We have one at the office now, come all the way over from Liverpool, to learn about cotton all the way from the ground up. They really do seem to be surprisingly like they are in the books they write about themselves. I have a twinge of that Kipling feeling almost every time I talk to this chap. Hear me saying ‘chap’? Do you like Kipling, Miss Alice?”

“Better than almost anybody; don’t you?”

“Very much. He’s another man I can read to you. This one at the office came out with me yesterday and is staying at the hotel until tomorrow.

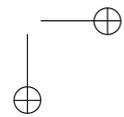
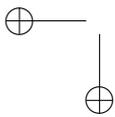


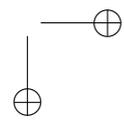
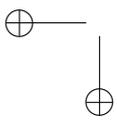
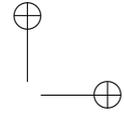
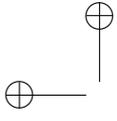


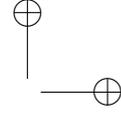
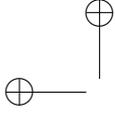
I thought I would like to bring him up awhile this evening, if your mother will be at home.”

“I’m sure she will,” Alice said. “Is he old or young? What is his name?”

“Howard; Brian Howard. He’s around twenty-five or six, I imagine. Is that young or old?”



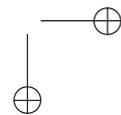
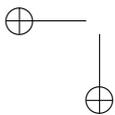


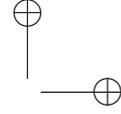
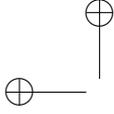


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It seemed to Alice, after the hotel finally closed for the winter, and Mr. Mason had gone home for Christmas, and she had more time to think about it, that it was very remarkable for the two men she knew the best and liked the most, so far – not counting Mr. Clayton – to be so entirely different from each other. She frequently talked it over with her mother and Rose. And Mr. Clayton was not much like either one of them, Rose reminded her, though of the two, he had more in common with Brian Howard than he had with Mr. Mason. They were nearer the same age for one thing, and they were both engaged when they came, for another. Brian – they had begun to call him that right away because Mr. Mason did – had told her about Angela the second time she ever saw him, when he was describing his family and where they lived, in

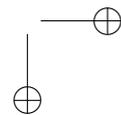
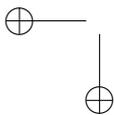
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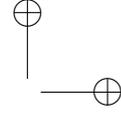
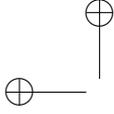




England. It sounded like the most delightful place imaginable. He had three brothers, all younger than he was, and Angela lived in the same neighborhood; she was the nearest thing to a sister they had ever had, he told her. Neither Alice nor Rose, nor their mother as far as she knew, had ever seen an English girl, and the pictures Brian had of Angela didn't show her as being pretty, but he talked as if she could do practically anything. "She's a good sort," he said, putting the pictures back in his pocket. They were getting used to the things he said by this time, but at first a lot of them had seemed terribly funny. He had spent most of his Christmas holidays with them, and Roddy seemed to like him better than anybody who had been at the hotel yet. He had never known an Englishman before, either. "That's what they turn out when they try, I suppose," Roddy said.

He had never been to college, he told Roddy. He had gone into business as soon as he finished at the public school he had gone to, which looked, from the pictures he showed them, entirely different from a school. It was more like a castle, or a church, and the boys all dressed exactly alike. It reminded Alice of the school Colonel Newcome and Clive had gone to. Brian had photographs of everything at home and he had begun right away to take them of everything around here. That was

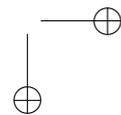
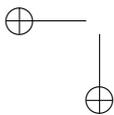


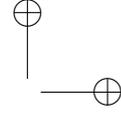
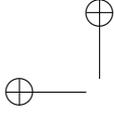


another respect in which he was like Mr. Clayton; and he was if anything even better-looking, but not nearly as amusing – at least not on purpose. He didn't always intend for them to laugh. For instance, when he asked them if they planted the maize at the same time they did the cotton; he had heard it was extraordinarily good to eat, he said.

“You mean green corn,” Mr. Mason told him. “‘Give my love to green corn’ – an Englishman I used to know put that in a letter he wrote to me after he went home. ‘Give my love to maize’ – if he had said that I would certainly have wondered who she was.”

Brian said he had never eaten any green corn, but he had seen it once or twice in the shops in London, very specially arranged and costing what amounted to about fifty cents an ear; not from America; it had come from Africa. Naturally he wanted to see a field of it, so one afternoon they took him to the biggest one they knew anything about, down in the bottom – hundreds of acres of it. The corn had all been gathered, but the stalks were still there, marching out of sight in every direction. He said it seemed incredible that as much corn as that could be eaten by any number of people. They laughed at that of course, and Mr. Mason told him the pigs helped. “And then



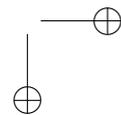
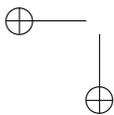


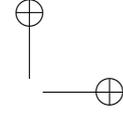
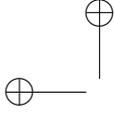
you eat the pigs. If there's anything in food, you should be able to conquer the world with this sort of thing," Brian said.

"The Romans did it once on millet porridge, so there can't be everything in it," Mr. Mason said.

The weather before Christmas was perfectly beautiful and they took really long walks. Even Rose condescended to go on them. She was a tremendous help to Brian with his nature photography – almost as big a help as Thor was a hindrance. They nearly drove themselves crazy trying to get pictures of all the different kinds of American birds. It seemed to Alice she and Rose had never been so happy as they were that autumn.

Sunday was naturally the best day for Brian and Mr. Mason both, but they hardly ever sat down and talked anywhere; there was always some special place they wanted to go to, and they generally had to hurry to get back, before dinner or before dark. Once when they were going through the woods and the others had gone on ahead, she and Mr. Mason stopped under the tree where they used to spend so much time talking, and it made her feel a little strange. In spite of all you could do, and no matter how happy you were, things were always slipping. You never could hold on to them; you just had something else instead.





“It seems so long ago, doesn’t it?” she said.

He had taken off his hat and stood looking up into the tree, but now he looked at her. “How can it, when you’ve never been in any long ago? That’s a place you are never going with me. I’ve told you that.”

“Do you mean you can really hold on to things – in your mind – so that you don’t feel sad about them?”

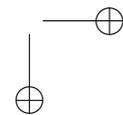
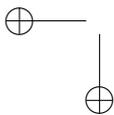
“Maybe they hold on to me.”

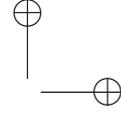
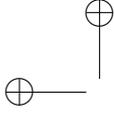
“This place, for instance?”

“This place. But I have had you here with everything green around you. Stand over there and let me put the colors in. Without your hat.”

She stood quite still, helping him to get the picture he wanted to keep; then he let her go and they walked on.

“You mustn’t ever worry about the past, Miss Alice,” he said. “It hardly ever lets you down. As a rule we like it better and better as we go along, or we can keep working on it until we do. Have you come to the place in your Vergil where they have the shipwreck and Æneas remembers right in the midst of it how much he is going to enjoy remembering it in the future? I always liked that part; I will read it to you one of these days. Remembering is all right; it’s looking forward that is tricky – that business of the future. I wonder if you





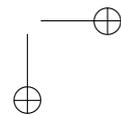
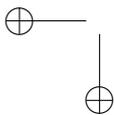
know the story – it’s my favorite of all the Trojan War stories – about Agamemnon refusing to walk on the crimson carpet they spread for him after the fall of Troy? I used to know a lot of it by heart. You see, he had conquered everything in sight; he had the past in his pocket, so to speak; but that carpet was going too far. Something, somewhere, wasn’t going to like it. I’ve been thinking about him, walking here, with all this color underfoot – and not refusing –

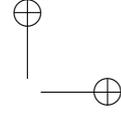
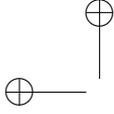
*What of the hours whose slow defeat  
Has spread this crimson here –*

It seems to take so much past – the good old solid past – to bring us where we can get the flimsiest glimpse of the future. And then look at the way we go plunging into it!”

“I don’t plunge,” Alice said. “At least I don’t want to; I would rather hold back. I always like the present so much. I hate to see it change into anything.”

“But you want a lot of experience; you told me that, don’t you remember? Experience brings on very fundamental changes – changing yourself – the way you look at things – the way you feel about them.”





“But just thinking does that too,” Alice said. “I feel differently about a lot of things since I have known you; I have told you that before.”

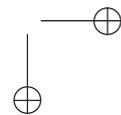
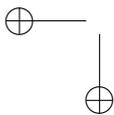
“Maybe I am experience, then,” he said, smiling; “had you thought of that? I should like to be, you know.”

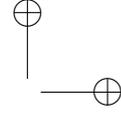
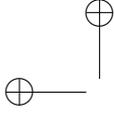
She had not thought of it, but he could tell that she was thinking of it now.



Brian talked less about books than Mr. Mason did – he could not have talked less than Mr. Clayton, who never mentioned them at all – but Brian’s main interest seemed to be in pictures and plays. And everything out of doors, of course. He had gone with some of his family every summer to some part of the Continent – by which he meant all the rest of Europe except England – and had climbed the Alps any number of times. He told Alice he wanted to send home for his collection of films; he thought some of them could be enlarged to fit the megaethoscope. He was the only man she had known, since Roddy, who had shown an interest in the megaethoscope.

There were more good plays than usual in town that winter, after Christmas, and he took her and Rose to practically all of them, though there wasn’t

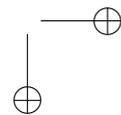
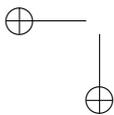


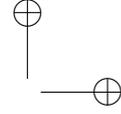
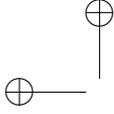


one of them he hadn't seen before, in London or Paris or somewhere. They saw Joe Jefferson in *The Rivals*, and Rose Coghlan in *Forgetmenot*, and several others. And one opera – Emma Eames in *Ernani*. They generally chose the matinee, but they could always stay with Miss Sallie Kent if they wanted to go at night.

Doing things in town this way made the winter seem entirely different. For one thing, they had to have some pretty winter clothes. As a rule they only needed pretty summer ones, because they so seldom went to town in the winter and hardly ever had company then. Brian said he liked the country just as well at one time as another for his part; but the cars were much less convenient after the hotel closed; they ran only every hour instead of every half hour.

Mrs. Kirkman and Kitty had kept on inviting Alice to visit them, but her mother thought she had better wait until the next winter. For several reasons, she said, but the main one was the expense. It had been a surprise to find out how much more expensive winter dresses were. It would probably take more than a hundred dollars to get her the ones she would need in Nashville, even for a short visit, her mother said. This seemed a disappointment at first, but it soon turned into a sort of relief. Alice was not at all sure she would

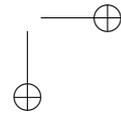
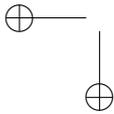


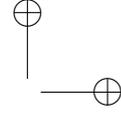
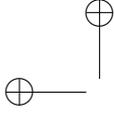


be as happy, going to visit in a gay city, as she was here at home; she would have liked to have the experience, though. She realized all the time how little experience she was getting.

It was when she sat down to answer Mr. Mason's letters that this came over her particularly. She always began by telling him any interesting thing that had happened – the plays naturally being the most interesting – and what she had thought about it; but she knew when she read it over that it was not the kind of letter she would rather write him. His were perfectly delightful; they were exactly the way he talked. Maybe hers were too, maybe that was what was wrong with them. He hadn't come back after Christmas because his mother was worse. He said she hadn't told him about it because she didn't want to worry him.

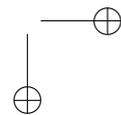
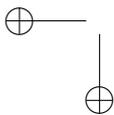
Alice read Mr. Mason's letters over many times, trying to decide what it was that made her want to do that very thing. Nothing interesting seemed to be happening to him; he didn't describe things very much either, or send snapshots of them. He had never even shown her the pictures he had already – the ones he said he was afraid she might not like, of the battlements at Elsinore; and yet every time he wrote to her about going down there to look after things, he made her feel exactly as if she had been along. "I was in the library this

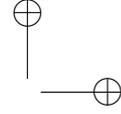
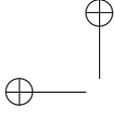




afternoon getting down a book I wanted, when you came in, leaving the door open behind you. The sun was behind you too, just on a level with your hair." That was a letter he wrote her when the days were getting longer. There was a pink camellia in bloom already outside the window where she sometimes sat with her sewing, he said. But he didn't say when he was coming back. He didn't even say he wanted to come.

In February Ada Rehan came in *She Stoops to Conquer*, and this time they had to go at night because there was no afternoon performance; and Miss Sallie Kent was away; so that meant they would have to come home on the car after it was over, and Brian would have to stay all night at their house because that was the last car. Then Rose's cold got worse instead of better and she couldn't go at all. It looked for awhile as if the whole thing was going to fall through, which was simply not to be borne by any of them – not even poor little Rose, who at least wanted to hear about it. It was terribly tense, and by the time reason at length prevailed and Alice was allowed to go with Brian alone, she had worked herself up to such a pitch of expectation that Miss Rehan and even Mr. Sheridan did well to keep up with her. When she was notified by a firm hand on her arm that the margin between the last curtain and the last

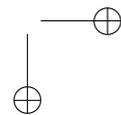
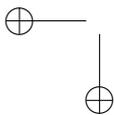


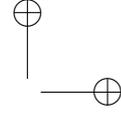
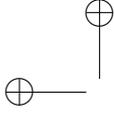


car was likely to prove a bit narrow, her stricken face at being taken away might have been thought reward enough for any performance. Brian at least knew how she felt.

“I gave your mother my word we wouldn’t miss it,” he said as they made their way through the still applauding crowd.

The few other passengers on the car, all more or less drowsy, got off before they had gone very far, and the conductor, who was sleepy too, settled himself comfortably in a corner for the rest of the run. Alice, feeling that she never wanted to sleep again, rocked on with Brian into the night, recalling excitedly the splendors from which she seemed as yet to be imperfectly withdrawn. It was a long ride and a noisy one, but their conversation was more than equal to it. Then, quite suddenly, in the midst of the country darkness, the car stopped. There was not a house in sight, but on the track in front of them there was another car, partially on the track; it had somehow managed to get partially off, and its motorman and conductor were resignedly awaiting the only help that was at all likely to arrive at that hour of the night. Their own conductor, now awake, gave Brian the option of taking the lady back to town with them or taking her somewhere else. It was about a mile and a half to the springs, he said.





“Why, we’ll walk,” Alice said, laughing at his troubled face. “I know right where we are now, and it’s such a lovely night.”

At any rate they were not going back to town, so they got off.

“I suppose there’s no chance of getting a lift of some sort,” Brian said, looking around, when they found themselves in the middle of a dirt road, with the lights of their car rapidly receding.

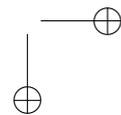
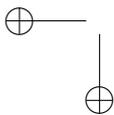
“Goodness no,” Alice said reassuringly. “We don’t want to wake up anybody at this time of night to hitch up something for us to go that little way in. Besides, nobody around here would have anything but a wagon, and we can outwalk that. Come on.” She had gathered up the pretty dress with the efficiency the case demanded and slipped her free hand through his arm, so he came on.

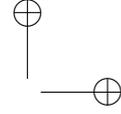
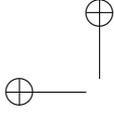
“If I hadn’t been so frightfully positive about it,” he said when they had gone a little way in silence – “I am afraid your parents will never trust you with me again.”

“But how could you help it? They can’t possibly think it was your fault.”

“But won’t they be frightfully worried when we don’t show up?”

“Of course they are bound to wonder,” Alice said.





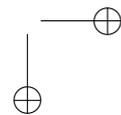
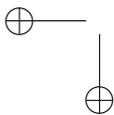
“But you make a difference between that and worrying?”

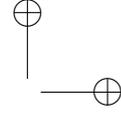
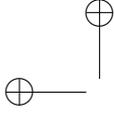
“Don’t you? You can wonder about all sorts of things – take that star up there – how I wonder what you are – but I certainly don’t worry about it.”

“But if it did something extr’ord’nary you would. And those shoes of yours – you and your sister both have the most surprisingly small feet.”

“Well, anyhow I’m glad it’s not muddy,” Alice said. They were her best shoes, and of course her tightest ones, but the road was so nice and springy that walking in any kind of shoes was agreeable, and the moon was not yet below the treetops in the west, so she could still see where to put her feet. It was an unfamiliar time of night; coming into it this way out of the dazzling scenes in which she had been reveling and which were unfamiliar too, it had a confusing effect on her imagination. After that warm and splendid show of life, the cold stillness and the stars seemed as different as death could be; and if she had been happy then, why was she happy now? She was, though; so happy she didn’t want to talk any more than she did in the theater; and Brian, who had not been saying much either, said now he knew she must be tired.

“But aren’t those trees we see just beyond the bend in the road the ones that grow along the



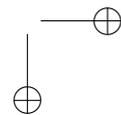
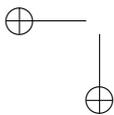


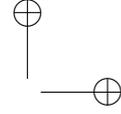
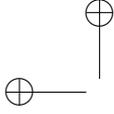
ravine?” he asked her. “Suppose we take the path that leads down through it, if it doesn’t look too dark? It’s quite a bit shorter than keeping to the road, you know.”

“I know it is,” Alice said; “and we can go through the fence from the hotel grounds; that will save us a lot more. But I am not the least bit tired; I’m just as happy as I was; it’s been lovely to walk. Just think – we would have been in bed and asleep by this time and everything would have been over! What time do you suppose it is? – No, don’t look; I don’t really want to know; I just want it to be after midnight.”

“It’s been that for some time, I imagine,” he said. “If only your parents aren’t worried. I like it so much myself, you know, that I’m sure there must be something wrong somewhere. I’m afraid I’m a bit like that,” he added apologetically.

The ravine, unlighted now, looked dim and mysterious and the springs were wells of darkness, but the sandy path that ran beside the little stream was plain enough to eyes now grown accustomed to the night, and the hotel, when they got to the foot of the steps leading out of the ravine, loomed visibly ahead of them. The electricity had been turned off everywhere and the only beacon was a window in the annex where the Negro watchman slept.





“There he goes now, I believe,” Alice said as they approached. “He’s supposed to get up once or twice in the night and walk around to see if everything is all right.”

“Does one have to have a password?” Brian asked.

Alice laughed. “His name is Andy; you might say something to him, so he will know we are all right.”

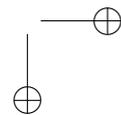
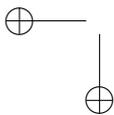
This reassurance, however, Andy was not destined to receive. His back had been turned toward them, but now at the sound of voices he looked around, and seeing what he had no doubt been long expecting to see – a lady and a man coming out of the ravine at midnight – he turned again and fled.

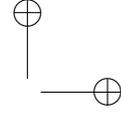
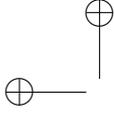
“How extr’ord’nary!” Brian exclaimed. “Evidently he thinks we’re not all right. What in the world does he take us for?”

“Burglars, maybe,” Alice said, surprised at how much good it did her to say it, ridiculous as it was.

“Are you quite sure it was the watchman, and not someone up to mischief himself?” Brian asked her.

“Darkies don’t have to be up to anything, to make them scary at night,” Alice said. “Andy is braver than most of them or he wouldn’t have that job. But just look at the way our house is lighted





up! They evidently haven't given us up and gone to bed." They were through the fence now, and she was surprised again at how glad it made her to see the lights. Never before had she thought of being shut out, like a wanderer in the night – a ghost coming back from the past.

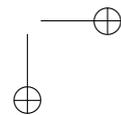
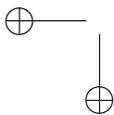
"There is something we always sing when we don't get back as soon as we promised, so they will know," she told Brian. "I will begin in a minute." They were almost there now, and in a minute she began, clear on the stillness:

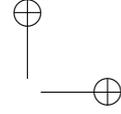
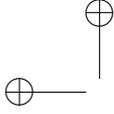
*"Flow gently, sweet Afton –"*

The front door opened and her father came out on the porch. "We didn't miss the car," she called to him; "we just decided we would rather walk."



It was just a little while after this that Mr. Mason's mother began to be worse, so he hardly ever left her to go anywhere. He was the one, even more than his father, he said, who seemed able to make the darkness lighter for her, by bringing back to her the time when there wasn't anything she didn't like – by reminding her of "all the little things, the frequentest, the dearest; when we were three people together, loving each other, naturally, but liking each other too in a way that nature





doesn't always provide for. Almost everything I say to her begins: 'Do you remember?' Wasn't I right about that being one of the priceless gifts?" His father had to be away a great deal, he said, looking after things at home: he always called it home. Now was the time when they had to get things started down there. "We begin plowing long before you do," he said. "I wonder at my father – down there alone. Alas, poor ghost!"

Alice read the letter over and over, and got Shakespeare and read *Hamlet* over too. She had never realized before how Hamlet loved his father; she had not even remembered about his being named for him: "I'll call thee Hamlet, king, father –" It was a much better play than she had ever thought it was, and not so terribly historic, if you went deep enough into the way they felt. It was hard to imagine anybody like the queen, but Ophelia and her brother –

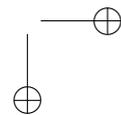
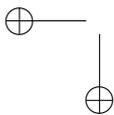
*– forty thousand brothers  
Could not, with all their quantity of love,  
Make up my sum –*

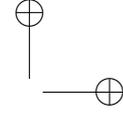
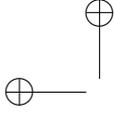
There seemed to be all these different kinds of love.

"Did you ever see any of the really great actors in *Hamlet*?" she asked Brian.

"I saw Sarah Bernhardt."

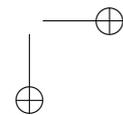
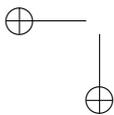
"Was she Ophelia?"

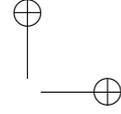
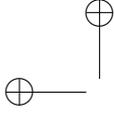




“She was Hamlet; she was the Prince of Denmark – the only one of our time – or anybody else’s time, so far as I am concerned. She was the one Shakespeare was writing about. You should have seen that audience, Miss Alice. It was in Paris and the audience was almost as extr’ord’nary a spectacle as the play. I do want to take you some time to see something like that. To see *that*, I should say, for there really isn’t anything else like it.”

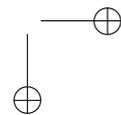
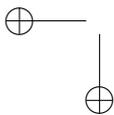
Brian was more enthusiastic about plays than anybody you could imagine, and especially Sarah, as he called her. He had even gone to see her with his French governess, when he was too little for his parents to be bothered, as he said. “Some day I’ll show you some pictures I drew of her when I was a little chap. And, do you know, the amusing thing about it is that they really look a bit like her.” It seemed to Alice that, judging from the men she knew so far, they were more carried away by the things they liked than girls were. Mr. Clayton and Mr. Mason, and now Brian, were always telling her about something they wanted to show her. Roddy of course used to do it too, but now it was probably Bella he wanted to show them to. He had talked to Alice about her at Christmas more than ever. At least he wanted to show her Bella – if there was any comfort in that.

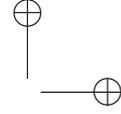
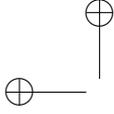




Brian was going back to England in the summer; in July, he said at first, but now he had put it forward to June. Probably on account of Angela, though he didn't say that was the reason. He said some things had come up that he had to talk over with his family. Alice and her mother both thought he was maybe planning to get married sooner than he had expected to. Rose didn't say what she thought, and naturally their father didn't care. Naturally too they didn't like to ask Brian, but one day when he was talking about it, Alice did ask him whether he was planning to come back in the fall, and he said: "Rather." She and Rose had got into the habit of saying "rather," and "quite," and "sorry," the way he did. Sometimes they forgot and did it right to his face, and it always made him laugh.

The thing he seemed to be looking forward to more than anything else in England, not counting his family and Angela, was fishing in the river that ran near where they lived and was "preserved," as he said; because apparently there weren't fish enough in it for everybody. The things Brian knew about fish! And about boats too. His first year at Eton he had got "in the boats," as he called it, and seemed never to have got out again, as far as his feelings were concerned. He probably felt like Mr. Mason about missing the water. But he





missed the dry sports too; the ones you played with a ball. Alice had never even heard of polo, or at least it had made no impression on her, until Brian described it to her. Playing it on horseback made it so much more picturesque than baseball or football either; it seemed almost like jousting. She even enjoyed hearing about some of the accidents and the hairbreadth escapes Brian kept wishing she could have seen; and the time the head came off of his stick when his side was already two goals to nothing, right in the hottest quarter of the game.

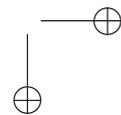
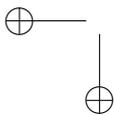
It was when he got on cricket that she had to make the biggest effort to be interested. He tried to explain it to her by baseball, which she had never been able to understand very well even when Roddy used to play it, and by the time he got through she just seemed to have two games she didn't understand instead of one, and of the two, cricket was evidently the more complicated, besides being apparently endless.

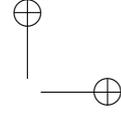
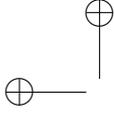
"And what happens at the last?" she asked him, to see if she could finish it a little sooner.

"Happens to whom?" he said.

"To your side. I mean how do you get out?"

Rose was listening too, and she suggested that you might die, which could very easily have hurt his feelings, but it didn't; instead, he explained to them that cricket was not dangerous, the way



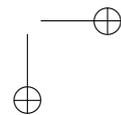
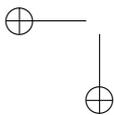


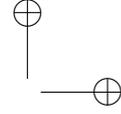
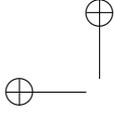
football was. It was really more fun talking to Brian than anybody else they had ever known, except Mr. Clayton, of course. At least the hotel was going to open the first of May this summer, so Brian would have a month to be there before he went back to England. There was hardly one chance in a thousand of anybody else coming that they would like as much as they liked him. He was a good sort.



Among the first people to come after the hotel opened were the Coutouriers, from New Orleans. They were sugar people, Miss Norma said. "She's his second wife, and older; you can see that. The sugar is hers – her first husband's. That's why Mr. Coutourier married her." It made Alice think about the candy cats and candy dogs she and Rose would do anything for when they were little; even swallow the nastiest medicine; they were the unfailing bribe. Miss Norma seemed to think Mr. Coutourier had been bribed a good deal the same way.

"He's French, I imagine, from the name," she said; "I don't know about her; and that governess is the Frenchest thing I ever met up with. She's been in this country fifteen years, she tells me,

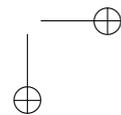
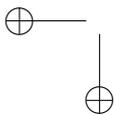


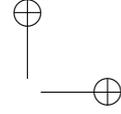
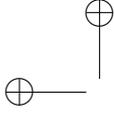


and look at the way she talks! Of course she talks French to the girls; that's about the only thing they have her for, I suppose. It's certainly not for her looks, and I don't believe she ever does a lick of housework; just sews, and hand sewing at that. She was telling me yesterday what she thought of people who sewed on the machine. It's a good thing she has plenty of time, but of course she can sew and talk French at the same time. I call her mademoiselle, the way the family do; I can't seem to get her name. How would you pronounce Adrienne de Fricourt, Alice?" Miss Norma spelled it, as written on a letter that had arrived at the hotel for Mademoiselle.

Alice did her best to pronounce it, inwardly resolving to do better. She would be the only out-and-out French person they had ever had a chance at since they began to study French, and even if she wasn't pretty, it would be wonderful for her and Rose to hear her talk some. They both thought she was interesting-looking. The Coutouriers were not, particularly; though Mr. Coutourier was considered very handsome, Miss Norma said. They were only going to stay a month, and then go somewhere farther north.

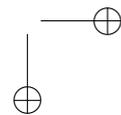
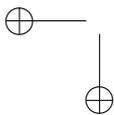
"Maybe she would help us a little with *Le Jeun Alexis Delatour*," Alice said. That was the story in their French book that they had been reading on

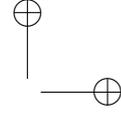
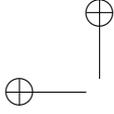




all this time, with their father and Colonel Bodley as a sort of advisory council on pronunciation. "She ought to have a purer accent than either of them have; wouldn't you think so?" she asked Rose.

Rose did think so, and Mademoiselle de Fricourt, when they knew her a little better, left no doubt whatever in their minds; both by what she said and by the way she said it. She seemed to feel even more strongly on that subject than she did about sewing on the machine. The French spoken in New Orleans, and especially by the Coutourier children, was enough to make the angels weep, she told them. "Now, you and your sister, with a voice already placed neither in the nose nor in the stomach, and with a regard for my language no doubt imparted by Monsieur your father, though its accent naturally he could not impart—" Her own regard, after fifteen years, for the language in which she said all this and a great deal more might have been open to question, but it did not occur to Alice to question any step by which one came nearer to the mystery of speaking a foreign tongue. She could not have explained why bad English seemed nearer to good French than good English did, but she took that hopeful view of Mademoiselle de Fricourt's conversation and never missed an opportunity of listening to her. Listening and sewing could also be practiced at the same time,





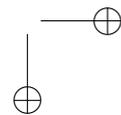
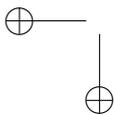
either on the hotel veranda or on the front porch at home.

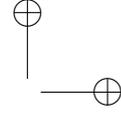
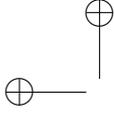
Brian of course was gone by this time. He didn't write as often as Mr. Mason did, but he said a good deal more about coming back. Two or three times already he had mentioned his sailing date: August 29. He seemed to want her not to forget it, though why, she had no idea. It didn't have anything to do with Angela, as far as she could make out. He didn't say a word about getting married, though of course you couldn't go by that. Mr. Clayton hadn't either. It had seemed to Alice the last time she saw Brian before he left, that he might be going to tell her something more confidential about his plans. At least he had asked her something about hers; he wanted to be sure she would be there when he got back, he said.

"What made you think I wouldn't be?" she asked him.

"Well, with a girl, I thought perhaps one might never know. It's been so awfully jolly, being here with you – with all of you in fact; one hardly dares to trust one's luck. I'm a bit like that, I'm afraid."

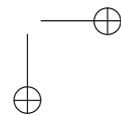
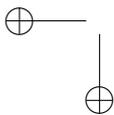
"But it's been lucky for us too," Alice said. "You might trust our luck; mine especially. I've never had any that was bad." She was smiling, but he still looked serious. "Perhaps I shouldn't ask you," he said; "I may be wrong; but even if I'm right,

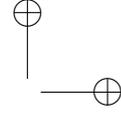
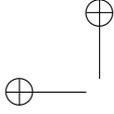




you still might not like it; in fact, you might like it even less —” He waited; they both did; she couldn’t imagine what it was, and he never did come right out and tell her, but it had something to do with Mr. Mason. He seemed to think, just as Kitty had, that she had some idea of marrying Mr. Mason, or that he had some idea of asking her. And of course she wasn’t going to explain to him either, any more than she had to Kitty, that Mr. Mason couldn’t marry her even if she wanted him to. She wasn’t going to tell anybody, not even her mother, the things he had told her about that. And Brian was so sort of vague about it that she really didn’t have to tell him anything. “It’s just that I know he’s such an extr’ord’narily fine chap,” he said. And that was like Kitty too.

Mrs. Clifford Lee was at the hotel that summer. She was one of their old friends, but she had a summer home in Canada, at Port Coburn, and this was really the first time they had seen very much of her. She couldn’t go to Canada because she had fallen down the steps of her house in town and broken her hip. She was quite large, which made it worse for her hip but really better for her, because she sat still a great deal anyhow. “She will make a nice background for you while Miss Sallie Kent is not there, if you want to go down in the evenings,” Alice’s mother said. She was another

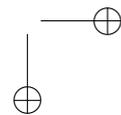
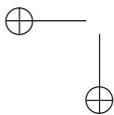


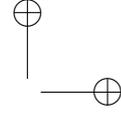
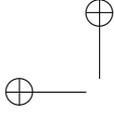


one of the people who had been beautiful when they were young. “You never would imagine —” her mother said, which meant that she thought Mrs. Lee had changed a great deal. All the same, Alice tried to imagine it. She tried to imagine Mrs. Lee and all the others, standing in a long row, beautiful and smiling, as if they had been called before the curtain to make another bow — even Miss Norma, with her small waist and her little feet. If they could see what was going to happen to them, would they still smile, she wondered.

Mrs. Lee talked a great deal about her son, Clifford, who seemed to have grown up since Alice saw him. He was at their summer home now, but next winter she wanted him and Alice to see each other a great deal, she said. “You must come in town and stay some with me. This hotel business is all very well as far as it goes — I’ll talk to your mother about it.”

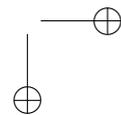
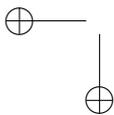
One of the people she introduced to Alice was a cousin — Mr. Lee Clifford; her name, or rather her husband’s name, turned the other way. They both seemed to think that meant something special and they explained to Alice just how they were related. He lived in Baltimore and was here only for a few days, on business; cotton too. Mrs. Lee asked her if she didn’t think he was very handsome. “He is considered so,” she said when Alice hesitated, as if

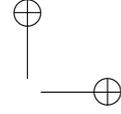
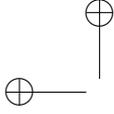




she needed to be prompted; so of course she said yes; but the trouble was his beard – his Vandyke. Mrs. Lee said he looked much more distinguished with it, though older, of course; but it kept Alice from forming any idea of how old he was at all, or even of how he looked.

Two funny things happened, on two different evenings when she went down to the hotel, and one of them was connected with this Mr. Clifford. There was a dance while he was there, and Mrs. Lee asked her to come to dinner and stay for it. It turned out that he really was a beautiful dancer, and he probably did look distinguished, from the way people noticed him. Then after a while he asked her to go out and walk on the veranda with him, and when they got to a sort of corner where nobody else was walking, he asked her to stand over by the railing with him and look up at the moon. So many people had complained to Mr. Deering about the electricity that he turned some of it off now on moonlight nights. It was while they were looking at the moon that he suddenly began to talk to her in an absolutely different way – asking her if she knew how beautiful she was, and things like that. “The face that launch’d a thousand ships,” he said. “Don’t you even care what it does to a man to stand here and look at





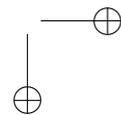
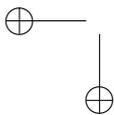
you and to realize that by this time tomorrow night he will be five hundred miles away?"

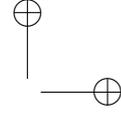
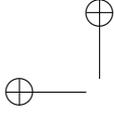
She was too surprised to say anything, and in a minute he began again. "You look just like that girl up there in the moon; did you know that? And just as cold and far away as she does, too – No, don't let's go in yet – I hear the music, but there's something I want to ask you. Can you guess what it is?"

It seemed to Alice, after all of this, that it was easy enough to guess, and she wanted to get it over with. "But I'd rather you wouldn't – that is, if you want to ask me to marry you, because I can't; I never could. I'd a whole lot rather not talk about it; I'd rather talk about something else – or dance – or go back to Mrs. Lee."

It was a great relief to her when he made not the slightest objection to doing all of these things, in the order named. That way, as she told her mother when she described the evening to her, it was easy to keep Mrs. Lee from knowing anything disagreeable had happened.

"Are you sure he meant for you to take it like that – so seriously?" her mother asked. "Sometimes a man – I mean, some men say things like that just to be flattering – to be agreeable. Some girls probably think it is agreeable. You don't have to





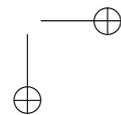
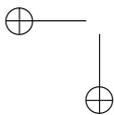
show them that you don't like it. Why not just listen?"

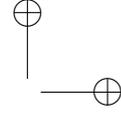
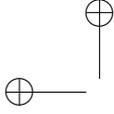
"But it sounded so – so –"

"I know," her mother smiled; "it wasn't particularly good. But sometimes they get better as they go along."

Alice did not pursue the subject. She was remembering what Kitty said that day about Mr. Mason having had plenty of practice. Was that how he got it, she wondered.

The other funny thing happened one evening when there was no dance, but just music, and she and Rose were sitting out on the veranda with Mrs. Lee, listening to it. Most of the guests were inside playing cards, but after a while Mr. Coutourier came out and sat down with them, to listen too. He was one of those men who always told you what they were playing. "The *Berceuse*," he would say, or "Tosti's *Serenata*." That was one of the things they didn't like about him, though Rose said they ought to be thankful he didn't hum them soulfully while they were going on. Mrs. Lee didn't like him either, but of course she had to be polite to him. She got up after a while to go to her room for something, and Rose went with her; one or the other of them always did, on account of her hip; and the minute they got inside, before the piece the orchestra was playing was even finished, Mr.



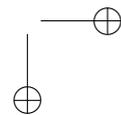
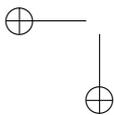


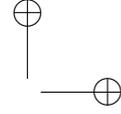
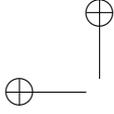
Coutourier asked Alice if she didn't want to take a little turn with him on the grounds. She told him she didn't believe so; "The others will be back in a minute, and I like what they are playing now," she said.

He seemed to realize this was a sort of hint, so he didn't say anything else until the music stopped; then he leaned over a little and said something in French, very fast, so she didn't understand a word.

"I was asking you if you could see your house from the other end of the veranda," he explained, laughing a little. "How much French do you and Mademoiselle speak together? She seems to think you are good at it. She tells me your accent is quite Parisian. That's more than she has ever told me about mine. You know I haven't ever been up there where you live. There's a place where you get through the fence, isn't there?" He got up and walked over to the side of the veranda, where there were some pink geraniums in a box on the railing. Alice knew he meant for her to come and show him where they got through the fence; she started to do it, and then didn't, so after a minute or two he came back and sat down again, in Mrs. Lee's chair this time.

The next piece they played was a Chopin polonaise, and it was loud enough for him to talk if he



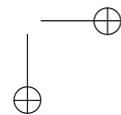
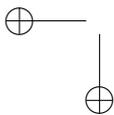


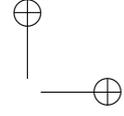
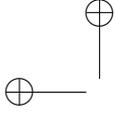
wanted to, without anybody hearing what he said; but he didn't. He sat still until they were through, and then leaned over and said something in French again, very slowly this time, almost in her ear: "Je vous aime" – and this time she understood. It was funny to think afterwards – even years and years afterwards – that those were the first words anybody ever said to her in a foreign language, not just as words, but as telling her something. It was a pity it couldn't be something she liked, or at least that he couldn't have had a little more business saying it to her. But it didn't scare her the way it might have done in English; not anything like it did to be invited to dinner that time on the street car. She really was not scared at all.

"But I knew you didn't want me to just sit there and listen to him," she said when she related this episode to her mother.

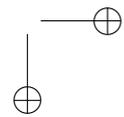
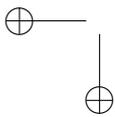
"He ought to have had his neck wrung." Her mother was emphatic. "What did you say?"

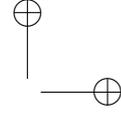
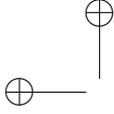
"I just pretended I hadn't understood that either," Alice told her; "and anyhow it was only a minute before the others came back." She was feeling rather complacent. That girl on the street car – that girl getting off of the street car and running for her life – seemed suddenly to have been somebody else. Mr. Coutourier not only had not frightened her; he hadn't even embarrassed her.





He had looked a little embarrassed himself, she thought, when Mrs. Couturier finished her game and came out on the veranda, "It's quite cool out here. Run upstairs and get me my white shawl, chéri," she said, and Mr. Couturier looked as if he was rather glad to go.



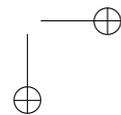
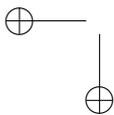


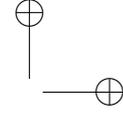
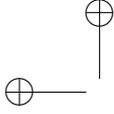
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When Brian got back in September it was almost the hottest weather of the whole summer, but he didn't seem to mind it in the least. It had been cold and rainy in England, he said. That had kept him from enjoying the fishing and all the other outdoor things he had been counting on. There had been quite a good deal of business too – matters that had come up in the year he had been away – to be settled with his family. “At first it looked as if we might be going to have no end of a row,” he said, “but it's all right.”

He certainly looked all right himself. It seemed to Alice she had forgotten a lot about his appearance; he looked so strong – so sort of sunny. “Haven't you done something to your hair or your mustache?” she asked him.

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“I don’t think so,” he said a little anxiously. “At all events I hope not, if it’s something you don’t like.”

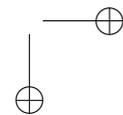
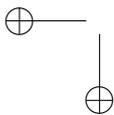
“I do, though; I think you look simply fine.”

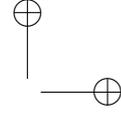
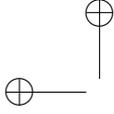
He relaxed. “I had some clothes made in London,” he said, glancing down at his legs.

“They’re beautiful. I like your tie too. Blue is really your color, isn’t it?”

“If you say so,” he said, blushing a little, but looking pleased.

He had brought them the most lovely presents – “A few things we still make rather better over there,” he said. A carving knife and fork for her father, made in the town of Sheffield, which Alice remembered in *David Copperfield* as the place where cutlery was made. “I have forgotten the exact date for carving your national bird,” Brian told him, “but I remember it was quite cold last year.” The Royal Worcester plates, he told her mother, were for her wonderful ice cream – given in remembrance, but a little too in hope, he said. Rose’s present was a beautiful portfolio for her music, from a place where they made leather goods to Her Majesty the Queen; and Alice’s, a dozen little Irish linen handkerchiefs with, not her initials, but her name – Alice – embroidered on them in her own handwriting. They had a regular celebration opening the packages and exclaiming over the gifts.





Brian had been there several days by that time, and not one word had he said about Angela.

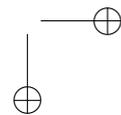
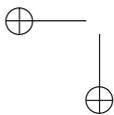
“I have something else that I got in New York for you,” he told Alice when she went out on the porch with him as he was leaving. “Could you walk out on the lawn with me a little way?”

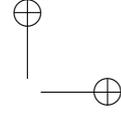
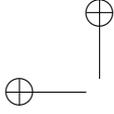
They walked the little way and then turned around to walk back, and presently Brian said: “I can’t tell you how many times I have seen this house, in my mind, looking just as it does now, with the light streaming out that way. I used to be horribly afraid I would never see it again in reality. I seem to be rather like that. Let us sit over there on the bench a minute. I have something I want to say to you – something to ask you, really. I wonder if you know what it is?”

Brian did not look the least bit like Mr. Lee Clifford, nor sound like him either, but those were Mr. Clifford’s words, and this time Alice was not going to risk a guess. She shook her head.

“I love you so terribly,” he said. “I simply don’t dare to ask you if you feel that you could ever be my wife; but if you are sure that you can’t – that you never can – for God’s sake tell me right away and let me at least begin to face it.”

“But Brian –” This was something altogether new; it did not sound like practice though. She





drew her breath and made another start: “But Angela –”

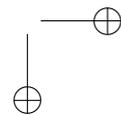
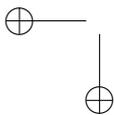
Angela was all right, he told her; he had known all along how Angela would be; his parents, however, had surprised him; his mother especially. “She is very British, you know,” he finally brought out, as if that covered the ground as well as anything that could be stated in so few words. “But all of that was what I went back for,” he said, “and now I see how small a part it was of what I have to do. The thing before me now is to manage somehow to make you love me, and I knew the minute I saw you again how poor a chance I must have.”

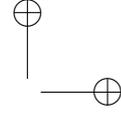
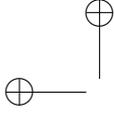
“But how could you know it, Brian?” she said. “You had never even mentioned it to me – not before tonight.”

“Well, if to mention it is all I need – now that I am free to do so –”

“I meant to begin with,” she said – “and now of course you have – mentioned it, I mean.”

“And you don’t think it will be boring if I keep on?” he asked her. “There is so much I want to tell you. On that ship – I think I must have walked a thousand miles around the decks, thinking of all the things I wanted to say to you. I was very happy. I thought how jolly it would be for us to be together on a ship some day. And then, when





I saw you again –” He stopped, and Alice waited; she didn’t want to interrupt what he was saying about the ship; but he began again in a different place. “You know, when a man wants a thing so terribly, it makes him feel that he may have been living in a fool’s paradise – at all events, it makes me feel that way. But as long as you will listen to me –”

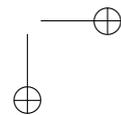
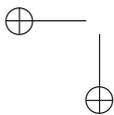
She was listening now, with deep attention. Something was happening to her that had never happened before. She had never thought of being loved by anyone in just this way; and certainly not by Brian. He had always seemed so free somehow – so able to take care of himself; and now he made her feel as if she could absolutely kill him, without even meaning to.

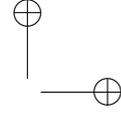
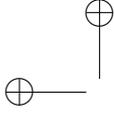
“Of course I will listen to you, Brian,” she assured him. “I can’t help being a little surprised, though, because it never occurred to me you felt like that.”

“And I may come then, whenever I can?” he asked hopefully.

“Why, of course you may,” she said, getting up and turning with him toward the house.

The next day he showed her the ring he had bought for her at Tiffany’s in New York, and it looked, as nearly as she could remember, exactly like one of Mrs. Kirkman’s that she had especially

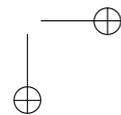
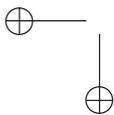


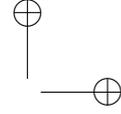
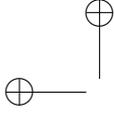


admired. She would have loved to try it on, but she didn't want Brian to see her do it – not until she finished making up her mind – and she certainly didn't want him to leave it. The only thing she let him do was to show it to Rose, but of course Rose didn't put it on either. They just had it in the offing, so to speak.

There was a lovely change in the weather after this; it was cool – almost bracing – and the elm trees began to take on their golden look again. At the equinox there was quite a storm, and the yellowest leaves were already lying on the ground. But whether she and Brian could get out and walk or had to sit in the house, he never missed coming a single day. He was really delightful. He had settled down now to be more the way he was before he went back to England.

The biggest change Alice noticed in him was, of course, the way he kept trying to make her care about him enough to say she would marry him. No matter what subject he started to talk about, he always got back to that – whenever they were alone, of course. That always made him serious, but the rest of the time he seemed to be so happy and everybody liked him so much – it would be dreadful, she thought, if she didn't ever want to marry Brian. Rose, and even her mother,



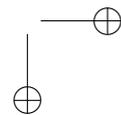
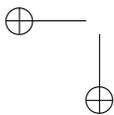


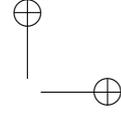
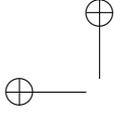
wondered why she didn't want to already. She was the only one who knew why.

Mr. Mason's mother was getting better now. The last two letters sounded as if he didn't have to be there all the time any longer. One of them was written from down in the country – from home.

One afternoon when she had been walking with Brian and they were coming back rather later than usual, they saw the new moon – not through the brush nor over anybody's shoulder, but right out in front of them – a curve of silver in a pale pink sky. "Stop a minute and say 'howdy' to it," she said, stopping, herself, and making a little bow to the moon, the way the darkies did. "It's for good luck," she explained, turning to see if Brian understood. But he was not looking at the moon; he was looking at her, and in a minute he said in a voice different from his usual one: "If you would let me kiss you, Alice, I think perhaps it might help you to make up your mind." His face was flushed all the way to the roots of his blond hair; he stood very still.

It was such a surprise that at first she thought she must be shocked, but then she realized she wasn't; she held her face up for him to kiss her without any idea in the world of what it would be like. She hadn't thought once about his arms; it seemed she really had not thought about anything;

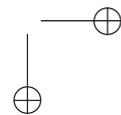
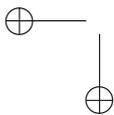


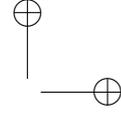
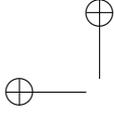


and when it was all over, she didn't know in the very least what she ought to be thinking now. But Brian didn't seem to be at all confused over the way he had kissed her – or over anything in fact. He even remembered about the ring, which was in his pocket.

Rose was the first one to notice it when they got home, but she didn't say very much. They all seemed to have taken it for granted that she would finally decide that way; and from now on she wore it practically all the time – at home. She always remembered to take it off if anybody came, though, especially Miss Norma.

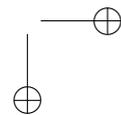
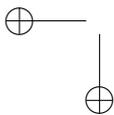
The hotel was keeping open that fall too. Mr. Deering had got out a new prospectus, as he called it, advertising the springs as a Between-Season Resort, especially for people who liked to go duck-hunting. The prospectus had pictures of men with guns standing on the banks of cypress brakes with the ducks they had killed hanging around them somewhere. Brian was more enthusiastic about it even than Mr. Deering. Some of his friends from the office came out all the time now and brought their dogs along, to stay over Sunday and go hunting with him. He brought back ducks to eat until Annie Sue said she was going to make her a feather bed out of all the ones she had picked.

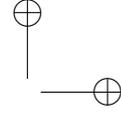
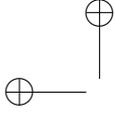




Alice didn't like to think of Brian killing that many of anything, but he evidently took it for granted that ducks were meant to be killed – just as her mother did about the frying-size chickens – and it seemed better not to bring up that side of it. Especially since it was the only side she didn't like. Why was it she liked so to look at Brian in his hunting clothes, going off with his boots and his gun – and even coming back, with his pitiful ducks strung up by their beautiful red heads – if she hated for him to kill them? It wouldn't do any good to talk to him about how she felt; he never bothered about things like that. If England should ever have a war again, Brian would probably be the first one to get into it. He would look beautiful in his uniform too, going off to shoot a lot of other men exactly as if they were ducks.

Another thing Alice liked about the hunting trips was that having Brian go off on them gave her so much more time than she had been having since he came back. Not for anything special; just to think in. Time was one thing she had always had such a lot of; and Brian, though he was delightful – maybe just because he was – broke the days up so. He was always getting off from the office and coming out earlier than she expected; and then of course the evenings – they used to be the longest, quietest part of the day.



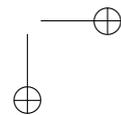
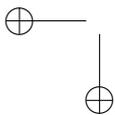


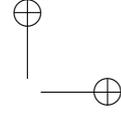
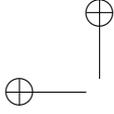
It was the most fortunate thing imaginable that he had gone off on a hunting trip the Sunday Mr. Mason came; especially since it was the only Sunday he would have. His mother was better, but not much better, and he could stay only a few days.

It was lucky too that Mr. Mason hadn't told anybody he was coming, because then Brian might not have gone and they couldn't have sat in the woods and talked.

He hadn't even notified them at the hotel. Miss Norma said you could have knocked her down with a feather when he showed up on Saturday night just the way Mr. Dupree used to do. "I was in the office talking to Mr. Deering when we heard somebody come into the rotunda and set his suitcase down. 'Who do you think we have here?' I called back to Mr. Deering. 'Not a person on this earth but William Barnwell Mason!' I'll tell you the truth, I wanted to hug him; it all came back to me so – all that time we'd been through together! He didn't look so well to me, Alice. Did you think so?" Mr. Mason had gone when she was telling them this. Alice said she thought he looked just the same.

Mr. Mason hoped he did. It was because he was in favor of sameness that he had been careful to avoid any innovations in his personal appearance



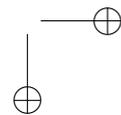
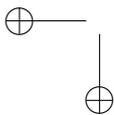


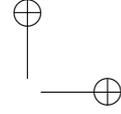
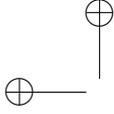
over which he might be considered to have control, such as new clothes, and had timed his coming with a view to the month and almost to the moment of certain experiences he had carried over, inviolate he fancied, from a year ago. The weather was not in his hands, but if he could have controlled that too, he could hardly have ordered a day, a Sunday, more like the one he had kept before him as the setting for his picture, charmed and unchanging, of Alice in the autumn woods. "I told you you would stay, you remember," he told her now.

"And even if I had known you were coming, I couldn't have spread more crimson down for you to walk on than this, could I?" she asked him.

"No; and I couldn't be more afraid to walk on it," he said. He looked at her thoughtfully, and then said, smiling a little: "And speaking of the gods – and goddesses – and their ways with mortal men – you know when a lady wears a ring, especially one that doesn't come off easily, she can't always get out of it as quickly as she would like to and put it somewhere else. Where did you put it when you saw me? You didn't swallow it, by any chance?"

Alice hated to think what must be happening to her face while he said this. He had not given the faintest indication of seeing her take the ring off; she could have sworn that he was looking at something else. She had put it inside the neck





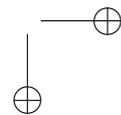
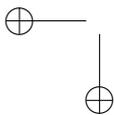
of her dress, but she couldn't tell him that. Her throat felt too queer for her to tell him anything.

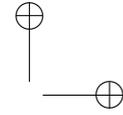
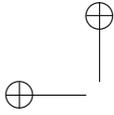
"I gather that for some reason you didn't want me to see that ring," he said. "But now that you know I have, maybe you will tell me what the reason was."

"I was afraid that you would – that you might be sorry about it –" She couldn't tell him that either.

"And now that you know I am, will you tell me whose ring it is – besides being yours, of course? Is it Brian's? That's my guess anyway, and even if it's a good one I can't claim a great deal of credit for it. I expect you've told me a good deal more about Brian than you realize, in those beautiful letters you have written me. But whose ever it is, I want to hear about it from you first; so tell me." He looked at her encouragingly: "Begin at the beginning," he said.

That made it easier – going back to the time when Brian first came. She told him about the way he had gone home, and come back, without ever saying why he was doing it, or telling them anything about Angela. Of course Mr. Mason knew he was engaged to Angela, but what he didn't know was how he had broken it off, and how he had had to bring his family around, as he said; especially his mother. "Do you know exactly





what he meant by saying she is very British?” Alice asked him.

“Whatever it means, I don’t think you have to worry about it,” he told her. “Do you remember the song I used to sing you – ‘Where’er you walk’? You are always going to be happy, Miss Alice. Everything in nature is praying for you, night and day.”

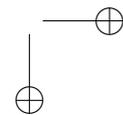
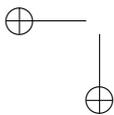
His voice was not a bit solemn, but the way he looked at her was. “And are you praying too – for me to be happy,” she asked him, “even if I have to be it away off somewhere? You used to talk about all the things we were going to do – all the things you wanted to show me. You said you wanted to show me yours first –”

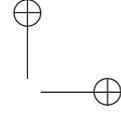
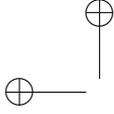
“I did,” he said; “I do; I shall never want anything else. But they are away off somewhere too. I couldn’t ask you to wait.”

“But I would have,” she said. “I will now, if you still want me to.”

He shook his head. “Impossible, Miss Alice. Impossible, my darling – I call you that all the time anyway, so it doesn’t matter. You would be like the lady in the old ballad who climbed her tower for so many years watching for her lover to come back from the wars. This war would be too long; you wouldn’t know me when I got there.”

“Would you know me?”





“That’s a different question. I will always know you because you are never going anywhere.”

She looked at him without speaking for a while, then she said: “Were you much surprised – about the ring, I mean? You said I had written things in my letters. You hadn’t forgotten about Angela, had you?”

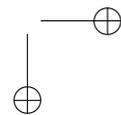
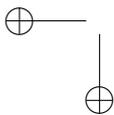
“No, I hadn’t forgotten Angela. I didn’t know exactly how much I could depend on her, though.” He was smiling, but when he spoke again he was serious. “One never knows about those things – for other people. They can be very cruel. It depends on who holds the sharp edge of the knife. And even being cut doesn’t always make them let go.”

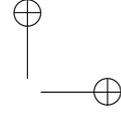
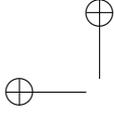
Alice looked at him anxiously. “Do you think I ought not to have let him do it?” she asked. “Maybe I ought to have thought more about how Angela was feeling, and not so much about the way he felt. Maybe I shouldn’t have listened to all those arguments Brian used.”

“But you did listen; doesn’t that mean you wanted to hear them? You were meant to hear them – from the time the world began.”

She was thinking: “And of course, now, if I did anything – if I said anything –”

He shook his head. “The sharp edge, my darling. You can’t throw Brian over now; not for Angela; not even for me. And least of all for any of the





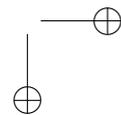
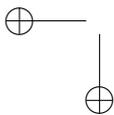
things I can give you. Shall I tell you what they are?"

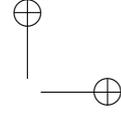
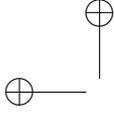
The softness of her silence answered him.

"Dreams, Alice; cloud-capped illusions; forgotten music, a forgotten language, a lost world. This is your world – this one here and now. You are its music; its song, its summer – looking at me with those grave eyes!" Heaven help him – did he want her to be happy? Was he praying for her now? Would he have the strength to leave her as he found her, wearing her bright ring and not the mangling chains of love?

There was something pathetic about the sheer perfection of her face as she sat there, her color changing, her lips parted, hanging on his words. That she should be, with a weapon like that, so helpless in his hands! Why, instead of showing mercy, was he not praying for it? Well, he was; but not from her.

He had never thought of himself as born to float in a sustaining air; his element, since he could remember, had been more or less charged with depressions and with dooms. Few of them, however, of his own contriving; his skirmishes with individual experience had been trivial by comparison, and he had habitually thought of his personal destiny as more likely to proceed by strategy and evasion than by the whole assault that must be taken full

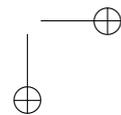
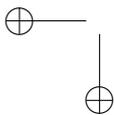


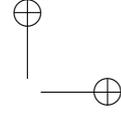
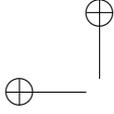


in the face and dealt with on the spot. Now it had come to that. He saw at once that there could be no hope for him in the open field; he must retreat into that region of his consciousness which had so far served him as a citadel, and which, for no better reason than that he could think of no better name, he called himself.

“Do you remember,” he asked her, “that time, here in the woods, when we were talking – I was talking; I always seem to be the one – about the difference between the past and the future – about how the past belongs to us and the future belongs to God knows whom? I am sure you do; you said something about it in one of your letters. I told you about Æneas and his shipwreck; well, this is mine. I am wondering what I ought to do – what I can leave undone – to make it something that some day it will ‘rejoice me to remember.’”

She followed this with deep attention, not altogether sure of its full meaning; then waited for him to go on. “How long does it take,” she asked him finally – “I mean how long ought it to take, to get over missing something that you had been caring about more and more all the time you thought you were learning to get along without it – if you have to give it up entirely, I mean? If you have to go where you are never going to have it any more? You say that you can hold on to things; but





suppose you couldn't; suppose you felt – suppose it was somebody you couldn't bear never to see again –”

These words, not too intelligible, and spoken in a voice that was anything but clear, showed him none the less with sufficient clearness where he stood – where he had stumbled from the path he meant to keep. He must find his footing or be lost.

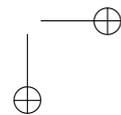
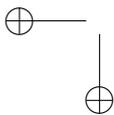
“Just what do we mean by giving up entirely?” he asked her.

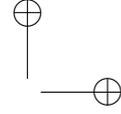
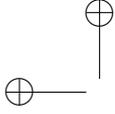
“I mean going back and being the way you were before.”

“But I don't believe anybody ever wants to give up that much, do they? They always want to save something out of it all; something they have learned from it, or think they have. Don't you remember what you told me about wanting to have experience?”

“I know,” she said. “Only I thought about it all the time as gaining something. I didn't think about losing – about giving up. I never imagined feeling the way I do now. Do you remember the time I wrote you about, when I came home with Brian and we had to walk from where the car stopped, and Andy, down at the hotel, thought we were ghosts and ran away from us?”

“I remember,” he said.





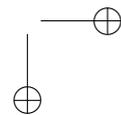
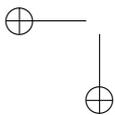
“Well, I had never thought before how terrible it would be to come back from – wherever it is – because there was something you couldn’t bear to give up.”

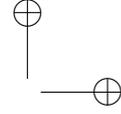
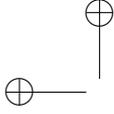
She had taken out the little handkerchief with *Alice* on it and was wiping her eyes. “I don’t want to start crying,” she told him. “Rose says I haven’t any idea how it makes me look; she says nobody would even know me.”

“Rose is mistaken,” he said. “You were crying the first time I ever saw you, and I knew you then, didn’t I? And, by the way, where did Thor go?” He whistled, and they heard somewhere an answering tustle in the leaves.

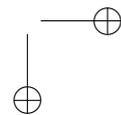
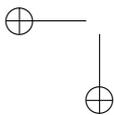
“I had forgotten all about him,” Alice said, putting the handkerchief back.

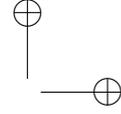
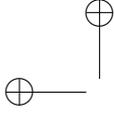
Mr. Mason looked at his watch and whistled again. He stood up and held his hands down to her. “Come,” he said.





Sitting on the terrace overlooking the Mediterranean and talking to Roderick about the way things used to be at home, Mrs. Howard recalled the last time she had seen the springs. They looked entirely different: the cups were gone, and a good deal of the concrete, and not many of the little pergolas where people used to sit were still there. The ravine was different too; it was neither one thing nor the other; it had not gone back to nature, and its advancement in other directions had been abandoned. The hotel, considerably shorn and chastened architecturally, was now a girls' school, and it was harder than ever, in this connection, to think what the springs could still be used for. Pierian they had never been; there was doubt about their even being mineral; and in any case they no longer looked sanitary enough for youth

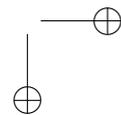
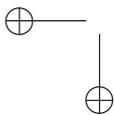


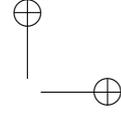
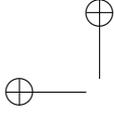


to drink of. Girls of that age didn't wade – if girls of any age still waded. There was probably a swimming pool for them somewhere. There were probably all sorts of things; very likely the only thing that could still be said about the springs was that they were there too.

She had on that occasion walked up the ravine as far as the last spring, the one of fatal memory. The pergola was gone from that one too, and the bench. There were no longer any facilities for lingering, even if she had wanted to linger; but she had not been tempted to do that at any point of this expedition into the past.

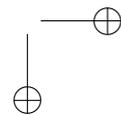
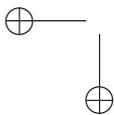
How easy it would be, she thought now, looking at Roderick there beside her, in that romantic spot, to spin him a little idyll of her romantic youth, taking those actual springs as a sort of symbol of her own beginnings, her emergence from a rustic obscurity into the social sun! It might amuse them both; and there was an allegorical side to it, she had to admit – if she wanted to take it. The source; she liked the French name. There was always a source; and there was almost always an allegorical side. Experience could usually be traced back to some beginning, and social experience was particularly traceable. Certainly if it had not been for the hotel she might never have met what she could now, if she wanted to, call her fate; and

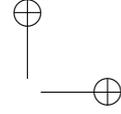
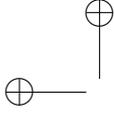




the hotel would never have been built there if it had not been for the springs; but if she went off on that tack she might as well leave herself out, and after all she was the thread the sequence was strung on; she was the instrument through which these dissolving views were seen – like the old megalethoscope at home. But she didn't want to take the metaphysical side either; she had never yet been so cornered that she had to decide between her subjective and her objective impressions, or be strictly accurate about what had happened to her, and what had only happened in a detached sort of way. Take those old photographs for instance: when her own travels began and she was confronted with the actual objects from which her stereopticon memories were drawn, the identity of the sensation was one of the things she had liked the best; there were moments when she really hadn't known where she was – under the Arch of Constantine in Rome, say, or under the square of black cloth in the library. Whether things happened outside of her or within, she was still the mysterious oneness that held them all together; their pattern, if they had a pattern, was the one she had drawn.

Looking back on that old, that young, time, when she made her grave decisions so lightly, she wondered what it was that had presided over the transaction. Was it knowledge or ignorance – what





she knew or all that she never knew – that had most influenced her choice? She had been so ignorant and had been left so free; an elemental freedom, such as winds might have, or wishes. And if all freedom is illusion, then she had had all of that. Freedom to choose, and the world to choose from. Only there was a catch in it. The world had a way of being a little late, or one's choice was made a little soon; so that it was made in ignorance after all. Knowledge had to be of what one had already chosen – or failed to choose.

“You will always be happy.” Mr. Mason had told her that; he had seen her choosing happiness. She knew a great deal about happiness by this time; almost all there was to know. About what she had not chosen, she naturally knew less – and all in retrospect. It was like looking back on something she had dreamed, or imagined. And it really was something that would always have had to be taken on trust if it had not been for Mr. Mason, who had given her direct evidence of it. She had been everywhere since then, and seen everything, but he had showed her that first.

