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"How do you think it understood our speech?
How did it know us as we loitered by?
Do we remind it of those two whose reach
It fluttered from?" So questions she, but I:
"We woke it, dear; a sleeping beauty this,
That slept and waited for us both to kiss."

W. T.

A FLORENTINE EXPERIMENT.

One afternoon, three years ago, two ladies were talking together on the heights of Fiesole overlooking Florence. They occupied the stone bench which bears the inscription of its donor, an appreciative Englishman, who in a philanthropical spirit has had it placed there for the benefit of the pilgrims from all nations who come to these heights to see the enchanting view. The two ladies were not speaking of the view, however, but of something more personal. It seemed to be interesting.

"He is certainly much in love with you," said one, who was taller and darker than her companion. As she spoke, she gave back a letter which she had been reading.

"Yes, I think he is," said the other reflectively, replacing it in its envelope.

"I suppose you are so accustomed to it, Beatrice, that it does not make much impression upon you," continued the first speaker, her glance as she spoke resting not upon her companion, but upon the lovely levels beneath, with the violet-hued mountains rising softly up round about them, so softly that one forgot they were mountains until the eye caught the gleam of snow on the summits towards the east. There was a pause after this question, and it lasted so long that the questioner at length removed her eyes from the landscape, and turned them upon her friend; to her surprise she saw that the friend was blushing.

"Why, Beatrice!" she exclaimed. "is it possible"—

"No," said Beatrice, "it is not possible. I know that I am blushing; but you must not think too much of that. I am not as strong as I was, and blush at everything; I am taking iron for it. In the present case, it only means that"— She paused.

"That you like him," suggested the other, smiling.

"I like a number of persons," said Mrs. Lovell tranquilly, gazing in her turn down the broad, slightly-winding valley, dotted with its little white villages, and ending in a soft blue haze through which the tawny Arno, its course marked by a line of tall, slender, lightly-foliaged, seemingly branchless trees, like tall rods in leaf, went onward towards the west.

"I know you do," said the first speaker. "And I really wish," she added, with a slight touch of vehemence, "that your time would come,—that I should see you at last liking some one person really and deeply and jealously, and to the exclusion of all the rest."

"I don't know why you should wish me unhappiness, Margaret. You have beautiful theories, I know; but in my *experience*" (Mrs. Lovell slightly underlined this word as if in opposition to the "theories" of her friend) "the people who have those deeper sort of feelings you describe are almost always very unhappy."

Margaret turned her head, and looked towards the waving line of the Carrara mountains; in her eyes there was the reflection of a sudden inward pain. But she knew that she could indulge in this momentary expression of feeling; the mountains would not betray her, and the friend by her side did not realize that anything especial could have happened to "Margaret." In excuse for Mrs. Lovell it may be said that so much that was very especial had always happened, and still continued to happen, to her, that she had not much time for the more faintly colored episodes of other people.

Beatrice Lovell was an unusually lovely woman. The adjective is here used to signify that she inspired love. Not by any effort, word, action, or hardly interest of her own; but simply because she was what she was. Her beauty was not what is called striking; it touched the eye gently at first, but always grew. People who liked to analyze said that the secret lay in the fact that she had the sweetness, the tints, the surface-texture as it were, and even sometimes the expression, of childhood still; and then, when you came to look deeper, you found underneath all the richer bloom of the woman. Her golden hair, not thick or long, but growing in little soft wavelets upon her small head; her delicate rose-leaf skin, showing the blue veins; her little teeth and the shape of her sweet mouth, — all these were like childhood. In addition she was dimpled and round, with delicately-cut features, and long-lashed violet eyes in whose soft depths lay always an expression of gentle trust. This beautiful creature was robed to-day in widow's mourning garb made in the severest fashion, without one attempt to decorate or lighten it. But the straight-skirted untrimmed garments, the little close bonnet, and the heavy veil pinned over it with straight crape pins, only brought out more vividly the tints of her beauty.

"No," she continued, as her companion did not speak, "I by no means wish for the feelings you invoke for me. I am better off as I am; I keep my self-possession. For instance, I told this Sicily person that it was in very bad taste to speak to me in that way at such a time, — so soon after Mr. Lovell's death; and that I was much annoyed by it."

"It has not prevented his writing," said Margaret, coming back slowly from the Carrara mountains, and letting her eyes rest upon the tower of the Palazzo Vecchio below, springing above the city-roofs like the stem of a flower.

"They always write, I think," said Mrs. Lovell simply.

"I know they do — to *you*," said Margaret. She turned as she spoke, and looked at her friend with the same old affection and admiration which she had felt for her from childhood, but now with a sort of speculative curiosity added. How must it feel to live such a life, — to be constantly surrounded and accompanied by an atmosphere of devotion and enthrallment such as that letter had expressed? Beatrice seemed to divine something of her friend's thought, and answered it after her fashion.

"It is such a comfort to be with you, Margaret," she said affectionately; "it has always been a comfort, ever since we were children. I can talk freely to you, and as I can talk to no one else. You understand; you do not misunderstand. But all the other women I meet invariably do; or at least pretend to enough to excuse their being horribly disagreeable."

Margaret took her hand. They had taken off their gloves as the afternoon was warm, and they had the heights to themselves; it was early in March, and the crowd of tourists who come in the spring to Italy, and those more loitering travelers who had spent the winter in Naples or Rome, had not yet reached Florence, although it may be said that

they were at the door. Mrs. Lovell's hands, now destitute of ornament save the plain band of the wedding-ring, were small, dimpled, very white; her friend Miss Stowe had hands equally small, but darker and more slender.

"You have been happy all your life, have you not, Beatrice?" said Margaret, not questioningly so much as assertively.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Lovell, "I think I have. Of course I was much shocked by Mr. Lovell's death; he was very kind to me."

"Mr. Lovell," as his wife always called him, had died four months previously. He was fifty-six years of age, and Beatrice had been his wife for a little more than a year. He had been very happy with her, and had left her his fortune and his blessing; with these, and his memory, she had come abroad, and had been for six weeks in Sicily, with some elderly friends. She had stopped in Florence to see Miss Stowe, who was spending the winter there with an aunt; but she was not to remain. In her present state of seclusion, she was to visit Venice and the Lakes in advance of the season, and spend the summer in "the most quiet village" which could be discovered for her especial benefit on the Brittany coast. The friends had not met for two years, and there had been much to tell, — that is, for Beatrice to tell. Her always personal narratives were saved from tediousness, however, because they were not the usual decorated feminine fancies, but plain masculine facts (oh, very plain!); and because, also, the narrator was herself quite without the vanity which might naturally have accompanied them. This last merit seemed to her admirers a very remarkable one; in reality it was only that, having no imagination, she took a simple, practical view of everything, themselves included. This last, however, they never discovered, because her unfailing tact and gentleness lay broadly and softly over all.

"And what shall you do about your Sicily person?" said Margaret, not in the least however associating the remark, and knowing also that Beatrice would not associate it, with "Mr. Lovell" and his "memory" (it was quite well understood between them about "Mr. Lovell").

"Of course I shall not answer."

"And if he follows you?"

"He will hardly do that — now. Besides, he is going to America; he sails to-morrow. Our having been together in Sicily was quite by chance, of course; he knows that, and he knows also that I intend to pay, in every way, the strictest respect to Mr. Lovell's memory. That will be fully two years."

"And then?"

"Oh, I never plan. If things do not assert themselves, they are not worth a plan."

"You certainly are the most delightful little piece of common sense I ever met," said Margaret, laughing and kissing her. "I wish you would give me a share of it! But come, — it is late; we must go."

As they went down the slope together towards the village where their carriage was waiting, they looked not unlike the two seventeen-year-old school-girls of eight years before; Beatrice was smiling, and Margaret's darker face was lighted by the old animation which had always charmed her lovely but unanimated friend. It may here be remarked that the greatest intellectual excitements which Beatrice Lee had known had been when Margaret Stowe had let loose her imagination, and carried her friend up with her, as on strong wings, to those regions of fancy which she never attained alone; Beatrice had enjoyed it, wondered over it, and then had remained passive until the next time.

"Ah well — poor Sicily person!" said Margaret as they took their places in the carriage. "I know just what you will do with him. You will write down

his name in a memorandum book, so as not to forget it; you will safely burn his poor letter as you have safely burned so many others; and you will go gently on to Brittany without even taking the ashes!"

"Keep it for me!" said Mrs. Lovell suddenly, drawing the letter from her pocket and placing it in Margaret's hand. "Yes," she repeated, enjoying her idea and dwelling upon it, delighted to find that she possessed a little fancy of her own after all, "keep it for me; and read it over once in a while. It is quite well written, and will do you good, because it is not one of your theories, but a fact. There is nothing disloyal in my giving it to you, because I always tell you everything, and this Sicily person has no claim for exemption in that regard. He has gone back to America, and you will not meet him. No, — positively, I will not take it. You must keep it for me."

"Very well," said Margaret, amused by this little unexpected flight. "But as I may go back to America also, I want to be quite sure where I stand; did you happen to mention to this Sicily person my name, or anything about me?"

"No," replied Mrs. Lovell promptly. "We did not talk on such subjects, you know."

"And he had no idea that you were to stop in Florence?"

"No; he supposed I was to take the steamer at Naples for Marseilles. You need not be so scrupulous; everything is quite safe."

"And when shall I return the epistle?"

"When I ask for it," said Mrs. Lovell, laughing.

The next morning she went northward to Venice.

Two weeks later, Miss Stowe formed one of the company at a reception, or rather a musical party. She looked quite unlike the "Margaret" of Fiesole as she sat on a small, faded purple-satin sofa, listening, rather frowningly, to the rippling movement that follows the march in Beethoven's sonata, opus twenty-six; she had never liked that rippling movement, she did not pretend to like it now. Her frown, however, was slight, merely a little line between her dark eyebrows; it gave her the appearance of attention rather than of disapprobation. The "Margaret" of Fiesole had looked like an animated, almost merry, young girl; the "Miss Stowe" of the reception appeared older than she really was, and her face wore an expression of proud reserve, which, although veiled by all the conventional graciousness required by society, was not on that account any the less apparent. She was richly dressed; but the general effect of her attire was that of simplicity. She fanned herself slowly with a large fan, whose sticks were of carved amber, and the upper part of soft gray ostrich plumes, curled; closed or open, as she used it or as it lay beside her, this fan was an object of beauty. As the music ceased, a lady came fluttering across the room, and, with a whispered "Permit me," introduced a gentleman, whose name, in the hum of released conversation, Miss Stowe did not hear.

"He understands *everything* about old pictures, and you *know* how ignorant *I* am!" said this lady, half-closing her eyes, and shaking her ringleted head with an air of abnegation. "*I* have but *one* inspiration; there is room in me but for *one*. I bring him, therefore, to *you*, who have so many! We *all* know your love for the early masters, — may I not say, the *earliest*?"

Madame Ferri was an American who had married a Florentine; she was now a little widow of fifty, with gray ringlets and emotions regarding music almost too ineffable to be expressed. I say "almost," because she did, after all, express them; as her friends knew. She was a

useful person in Florence because she indefatigably knew everybody, the English and Americans as well as the Florentines; and she spent her time industriously at work mingling these elements, whether they would or no. No one thanked her for this, especially, or remembered it after it was done; if republics are ungrateful, even more so is a society whose component parts are transient, coming and departing day by day. But Madame Ferri herself appreciated the importance of her social combinations, if no one else did; and, like many another chemist, lived on content in the consciousness of it.

"I know very little about old pictures," said the stranger, with a slight smile, finding himself left alone beside Miss Stowe.

"And I — do not like them," she replied.

"If, more than that, you dislike them, we shall have something to talk about. Dislike can generally express itself very well."

"On the contrary, I think it is one of those feelings we do not express, — but conceal."

"You are thinking of persons, perhaps. I was speaking of things. Pictures are things."

Miss Stowe felt herself slightly displeased; and the feeling was not lessened when, with a "Will you allow me?" the stranger took a seat at the end of her sofa, in the space left free by the gray silken sweep of her dress. There was in reality an abundance of room for him; other men were seated, and there was no chair near. Still, the sofa was a small one; the three Italians and two Frenchmen who had succeeded each other in the honor of standing beside her for eight or ten minutes' conversation had not thought of asking for the place so calmly taken by this newcomer. She looked at him as he began talking; he was quite unlike the three Italians and two Frenchmen. He was not ruddy enough for an Englishman of that complexion; he had a lethargic manner which was un-American. She decided, however, that he was, like herself, an American; but an American who had lived much abroad.

He was talking easily upon the various unimportant subjects in vogue at a "small party;" she replied in the same strain.

Margaret Stowe was not beautiful; "pretty" was the last word that could have been applied to her. Her features were irregular; she had a well-shaped, well-poised head, and a quantity of dark hair which she wore closely braided in a low knot behind. She was tall, slender, and rather graceful; she had dark eyes. As has been said before, she was not beautiful; but within the past two years she had acquired, her friends thought, an air of what is called distinction. In reality this was but a deep indifference, combined with the wish at the same time to maintain her place unchanged in the society in which she moved. Indifference and good manners taken together, in a tall and graceful person, will generally give that air. Beatrice Lovell had not perceived this change in her friend; but on that day at Fiesole, Miss Stowe had been simply the "Margaret" of old.

In accordance with what we have called her good manners, Miss Stowe now gave to the stranger beside her easy replies, several smiles, and a fair amount of intelligent attention. It was all he could have expected; but, being a man of observation, he perceived her indifference lying broadly underneath, like the white sand under a shallow river.

During the same week she met him at a dinner party, and they had some conversation. Later, he was one of the guests at a reception which she attended, and again they talked together awhile. She now mentioned him to her aunt, Miss Harrison, to whom she generally

gave, every few days, a brief account of the little events in the circle to which they belonged. She had learned his name by this time; it was Morgan.

"I wonder if he is a grandson of old Adam Morgan," said Miss Harrison, who was genealogical and reminiscent. "If he is, I should like to see him. Has he a Roman nose?"

"I think not," said her niece, smiling.

"Well, describe him, then."

"He is of medium height, neither slender nor stout; he is light, with rather peculiar eyes because they are so blue, — a deep dull blue, like old china; but they are not large, and he does not fully open them. He has a long light mustache, no beard, and very closely cut light hair."

"He must be good-looking."

"No; he is not, especially. He may be anywhere between thirty and forty; his hair in a cross-light shows a slight tinge of gray. He looks fatigued. He looks cynical. I should not be surprised if he was selfish. I do not like him."

"But if he should be the grandson of old Adam, I should have to invite him to dinner," said Miss Harrison, reflectively. "I could not do less, I think."

"I won't poison the soup. But Morgan is a common name, Aunt Ruth; this is the fourth Morgan I have met here this spring. There is n't one chance in a thousand that he belongs to the family you know." She was smiling as she spoke, but did not explain her smile; she was thinking that "Morgan" was also the name signed to that letter locked in her writing-desk, a letter whose expressions she now knew quite well, having obeyed Mrs. Lovell's injunction to "read it over," more than once. They were ardent expressions; it might be said indeed that they were very ardent.

But now and then that one chance in a thousand, so often summarily dismissed, asserts its existence, and appears upon the scene. It turned out in the present case that the stranger was the grandson of the old Adam Morgan whom Miss Harrison remembered. Miss Stowe, in the mean time, had continued to meet him; but now she was to meet him in a new way, when he would be more upon her hands, as it were; for Miss Harrison invited him to dinner.

Miss Ruth Harrison was an invalid of nearly sixty years of age; she had been for ten years in Europe, but had only had her orphaned niece with her during the past eighteen months. She had a large fortune, and she gave Margaret every luxury; especially she liked to see her richly dressed. But it was quite well understood between them that the bulk of her wealth was to go to another relative in America, who bore her family name. It was understood between them, but it was not understood outside. On the contrary, it was generally believed in Florence that Miss Stowe would inherit the whole. It is just possible that this belief may have had a remote influence in shaping the opinion which prevailed there, namely, that this young lady was "handsome" and "gracious," when in truth she was neither. But Mr. Morgan, the new-comer, exhibited so far, at least, no disposition to fall in with this fiction. In his estimation Miss Stowe was a conventionally agreeable, inwardly indifferent young lady of twenty-six, who carried herself well, but was too ironical, as well as too dark. He came to dinner. And did not change his opinion.

A few days after the dinner, Miss Harrison invited her new acquaintance to drive; she was able to go out for an hour or two in the afternoon, and she had a luxurious carriage and fine horses. Miss Stowe did not accompany them; she went off by herself to walk in the Boboli Garden.

Miss Harrison returned in good humor. "I like him," she announced, as the maid removed her bonnet. "Yes, — I think I may hope that the grandson

of old Adam is not going to be a disappointment."

"The grandson of Adam — I suppose his name is Adam also — is a fortunate person, Aunt Ruth, to have gained your liking so soon; you do not often take likings to strangers."

"His name is not Adam," pursued Miss Harrison, "and that is a pity; there is character, as well as association, in Adam. He has a family name — Trafford. His mother was a Miss Trafford of Virginia, it seems."

Miss Stowe was selecting flowers from a fragrant heap before her, to fill the wide-mouthed vases which stood on the floor by her side; but now she stopped. "Trafford Morgan" was the name signed at the end of that letter! It must be he; it was not probable that there were two names of that especial combination; it seemed a really remarkable chance. And evidently he had not gone to America, in spite of Mrs. Lovell's belief. She began to smile and almost to laugh, bending her head over a great soft purple heap of Florence lilies, in order that her aunt might not observe it. But the large room was dusky, and Miss Harrison near-sighted; she observed nothing. The two ladies occupied an apartment in a house which, if it had not been so new, would have been called a "palace." Although modern, the measurements had been after the old Florentine pattern, and the result was that the occupants moved about in rooms which could have contained entire, each one, a small American house. But they liked the vastness. After a moment Miss Stowe went on arranging her blossoms, but inwardly she was enjoying much entertainment; she was going over in her own mind the expressions of that letter, which now took on quite a new character, coming no longer from some formless stranger, but from a gentleman with whom she had spoken, a person she had met and would meet again. "I never should have dreamed that he was capable of it," she said to herself. "He has seemed indifferent, *blasé*. But it places *me* in a nice position! Especially now that Aunt Ruth has taken a fancy to him. I must write to Beatrice immediately, and ask her to take back the stupid letter." She wrote during the same evening.

The next day she was attacked by a severe illness, severe although short. No one could tell what was the matter with her; even the physician was at fault. She did not eat or sleep, she seemed hardly to know what they said when they spoke to her. Her aunt was alarmed. But at the end of the week, as suddenly as she had fallen ill she came back to life again, rose, ordered the maid to braid her hair, and appeared at Miss Harrison's lonely little dinner-table quite herself, save that she was tremulous and pale. But by the next day even these signs were no longer very apparent. It was decided that she had had an attack of "nervous prostration;" "although why in the world you should have been seized by it just now, and here, I am at a loss, Margaret, to imagine," said her aunt.

On the day of her reappearance at the dinner-table, there came a letter from Beatrice which bore the post-mark of a village on one of the Channel islands. Mrs. Lovell had changed her plans, and gone yachting for a month or two with a party of friends, a yacht probably being considered to possess attributes of seclusion more total than even the most soundless village on the Brittany shore. Of course she had not received Margaret's letter, nor could she receive one — their route being uncertain, but nevertheless to the southward — until her return. Communication between them for the present was therefore at an end.

On the afternoon after Margaret's reappearance, Madame Ferri was making a visit of congratulation upon the recovery of "our dear girl." It was a cool day, a heavy rain had fallen, and fresh

snow gleamed on the summits of the Apennines; our dear girl, very unresponsive and silent, was dressed in black velvet, whose rich plain folds brought out her slenderness and made more apparent than usual the graceful shape of her head and hair. But the unrelieved black made her look extremely pale, and it was her recent illness, probably, which made her look also tired and languid. Madame Ferri, who kept constantly in practice her talent for being charming (she was always spoken of as "charming"), looked at her for a time, while conversing; then she rose, took all the crimson roses from a vase, and, going to her, placed one in her hair, meditatively; another in a button-hole of the closely fitting high corsage; and, after a moment's reflection, all the others in a bunch in a velvet loop which was on the side of the skirt not quite half way down, rapidly denuding herself of pins for the purpose as she proceeded. "There!" she said, stepping back a few paces to survey her handiwork, with her head critically on one side, "*now* you are a picture. Look, dear Miss Harrison, pray look."

Miss Harrison put up her glass and approved. And then, while this climax still lasted, Madame Ferri took her departure; she liked to depart in a climax.

She had hardly gone when another card was brought in: "Mr. Trafford Morgan." He too had come to pay his respects to Miss Harrison upon the change for the better in her niece; he had not expected to see the latter person, he had merely heard that there was "an improvement." After he had been there twenty minutes, he said to himself that there was; and in more ways than one. She not only looked much better than usual (this may have been owing to the roses), but there was a new gentleness about her; and she listened with a perceptible increase of attention to what he said. Not that he cared much for this; he had not admired Miss Stowe; but any man (this he remarked to himself) likes to be listened to when he is talking, better than the contrary; and as the minutes passed he became conscious that Miss Stowe was not only listening, but bestowing upon him also what seemed an almost serious attention. She did not say much, — Miss Harrison said more; but she listened to and looked at him. She had not looked at him previously; people can turn their eyes upon one without really looking, and Miss Stowe had excelled in this accomplishment.

During the next week he met her at a dinner-party; she went to these entertainments with a friend of her aunt's, a lady who was delighted to act as chaperone for the heiress. The spring season was now at its height in Florence, and the members of the same circle perforce constantly met each other; on each separate occasion during the two weeks that followed, Trafford Morgan was conscious that Miss Stowe was honoring him, although in a studiously guarded and quiet way, with much of a very observant attention. This, in the end, excited in him some curiosity. He had as good an opinion of himself as most men have; but he did not think it probable that the heiress had suddenly fallen in love with him without rhyme or reason, as it were, the "rhyme" being that he was neither an Apollo, an Endymion, nor a military man; the "reason," that he had never in the least attempted to make himself agreeable to her. Of course, if he *had* attempted — But he had not. She was not in need of entertainment; she had enough of that, of all sorts, including apparently the sort given by suitors. She showed no sign of having troublesomely impulsive feelings; on the contrary she seemed cold. "She is playing some game," he thought; "she has some end in view. But if she wishes to make use of me, she must show her hand more. I may assist her, and I may not; but at any rate I must understand what it is, —

I will not be led." He made up his mind that her aim was to excite remark in their circle; there was probably some one in that circle who was to be stimulated by a little wholesome jealousy. It was an ancient and commonplace method; and he had not thought her commonplace. But human nature at heart is but a commonplace affair after all, and the methods and motives of the world have not altered much, in spite of the gray lapse of ages.

Morgan was an idle man; at present he was remaining in Italy for a purpose and had nothing to do there. The next time he met Miss Stowe, he followed out his theory and took the lead; he began to pay her attention which might, if pursued, have aroused observation. To his surprise she drew back, and so completely, that he was left stranded. He tried this three times on three different occasions; and each time met the same rebuff. It became evident, therefore, that Miss Stowe did not wish for the kind of attention which he had supposed was her point; but as, whenever she could do it unobserved, she continued to turn upon him the same quiet scrutiny, he began to ask himself whether she wished for any other. An opportunity occurred which made him think that she did.

It was in the Boboli Garden, where he had gone to walk off a fit of weariness; here he came upon Miss Stowe. There seemed to be no one in the garden save themselves, at least no one whom they knew; only a few stray tourists wandering about, with Baedeker, Horner, and Hare. The world of fashion was at the Cascine that day, where races were going on. Morgan did not feel like talking; he exchanged the usual phrases with Miss Stowe, and then prepared to pass on. But she said, gently, "Are you going now? If not, why not stroll awhile with me?"

After this, as he mentally observed, of course he was forced to stroll awhile. But, on the whole, he found himself entertained, because his companion gave him an attention which was almost devout. Its seriousness indeed compelled him to be serious likewise, and made him feel as though he was in an atmosphere combining the characteristics of a church and a school; he was partly priest, partly pedagogue, — and the sensation was amusing. She asked him what he liked best in Florence; and she called it, gravely, "enchanting Florence."

"Giotto and Botticelli," he answered.

"I wish you would be in earnest; I am in earnest."

"With all the earnestness in the world, Miss Stowe, I could only repeat the same reply."

"What is it you find to like in them? Will you tell me?"

"It would take an age — a full half-hour; you would be quite tired out. Women are so much quicker in their mental processes than we are, that you would apprehend what I was going to say before I could get it out; you would ascend all the heights, scour all the plains, and arrive at the goal before I came even in sight, where you would sit waiting, patiently or impatiently, as I, slowly and with mortified perception, approached."

"Yes, we are quick; but we are superficial. I wish you would tell me."

He glanced at her; she was looking at him with an expression in her eyes which was extremely earnest. "I cannot deliver a discourse while walking," he said. "I require a seat."

"Let us go to the amphitheatre; I often sit there for a while on the stone benches under the old statues. I like to see them standing around the circle; they are so serenely indifferent to the modern pencil-scrawlings on their robes, so calmly certain that their time will come again."

"What you say is entirely charming. Still, I hardly think I can talk to the statues. I must have something more

— more secluded." He was aware that he was verging upon a slight impertinence; but he wished to see whether she would accede, — what she would do. He made no effort to find the seclusion of which he spoke; he left that to her.

She hesitated a moment; then, "We might go to a seat there is under a tree at the top of the slope," she said. "It is a pleasant place."

He assented; and they went up the path by the side of the tall, stately hedges, and past the fountain and the great statue of Abbondanza. The stone bench was not one of those sought for; it was not in front, but on the western side. It commanded a view of the city below, with the Duomo and Giotto's lovely bell-tower; of the fruit-trees all in flower on the outskirts; of the tree-tops of the Cascine, now like a cloud of golden smoke with their tender brown leaflets, tasseled blossoms, and winged seeds; of the young grain springing greenly down the valley; and the soft, velvety mountains rising all around. "How beautiful it is!" she said, leaning back, closing her parasol and folding her hands.

"Beautiful — yes; but barren of human interest save to those who are going to sell the fruit, or who depend upon the growth of the grain. The beauty of art is deeper; it is all human."

"I must be quite ignorant about art," she answered, "because it does not impress me in that way; I wish it did. I wish you would instruct me a little, Mr. Morgan."

"Good!" he thought. "What next?" But although he thought, he of course was obliged to talk also, and so he began about the two art masters he had mentioned. He delivered quite an epic upon Giotto's two little frescoes in the second cloister of Santa Maria Novella, and he openly preferred the third there — the little Virgin going up the impossible steps — to Titian's splendid picture of the same subject, in Venice. He grew didactic and mystic over the round Botticelli of the Uffizi and the one in the Prometheus room at the Pitti; he invented as he went along, and amused himself not a little with his own unusual flow of language. His companion listened, and now and then asked a question. But her questions were directed more towards what he thought of the pictures (after a while he noticed this), and what impressions they made upon him, than to the pictures themselves or their claims to celebrity. As he went on, he made some slight attempts to diverge a little from the subject in hand, and skirt, if ever so slightly, the borders of flirtation; he was curious to see if she would follow him there. But she remained unresponsive; and, while giving no sign of even perceiving his digressions, she brought him back to his art atmosphere, each time he left it, with a question or remark very well adapted for the purpose; so well, indeed, that it could not have been by chance.

She declined his escort homeward, pretexting a visit she wished to pay; but she said, of her own accord, that she would sing for him the next time he came. He knew this was a favor she did not often grant; Madame Ferri had so informed him.

He went, without much delay; and she sang several songs in the dusky corner where her piano stood, while he sat near. The light from the wax candles at the other end of the large room, where Miss Harrison was knitting, did not penetrate here; but she said she liked to sing in a semi-darkness, as she had only a twilight voice. It was in truth not at all powerful; but it was sweet and low, and she sang with much expression. Trafford Morgan liked music; it was not necessary to make up a conviction or theory about that; he simply had a natural love for it, and he came more than once to hear Miss Stowe sing.

In the mean time Miss Harrison continued to like "the grandson of old Adam," and again invited him to drive. A month went by, and, by the end of it, he had seen in one way and another a good deal of these two ladies. The "later manner" (as he mentally called it) of Miss Stowe continued; when they were in company, she was as she had been originally, but when they were unobserved, or by themselves, she gave him the peculiar sober attention which he did not quite comprehend. He had several theories about it; and varied between them. He was a man who did not talk of persons, who never told much. If questioned, while answering readily and apparently without reserve, it was noticed afterwards that he had told nothing. He had never spoken of Sicily, for instance, but had talked a good deal of Sweden. This reticence, so exasperating to many women, seemed agreeable to Miss Stowe, who herself did not tell much, or talk of persons. That is, generally. One person she talked about; and with persistence. Morgan was hardly ever with her that she did not, sooner or later, begin to talk to him about himself. Sometimes he was responsive, sometimes not; but responsive or unresponsive, in society or out of it, he had talked, all told, a goodly number of hours with Miss Stowe when May attained its zenith, and the season waned.

The tourists had gone to Venice; the red gleam of guide-books along the streets and the conscientiousness of woolen traveling dresses in the galleries were no longer visible. Miss Stowe now stepped over the boundary-line of her caution a little; many of the people she knew had gone; she went with Trafford to the Academy, and the Pitti; she took him into the cool dim churches and questioned him concerning his creed; she strolled with him through the monastery of San Marco and asked what his idea was of the next world. She said she liked cloisters; she would like to walk in one for an hour or two every day.

He replied that there were a number of cloisters in Florence; they might visit them in succession and pace around quietly. The effect would be heightened if she would read aloud, as they paced, short sentences from some ancient stiff-covered little book on De Contemptu Mundi.

"Ah," she said, "you are not in earnest. But I am!"

And she seemed to be; he said to himself that he had hardly had a look or word from her which was not only earnest, but almost portentously so. She now began to do whatever he asked her to do, whether it was to sing Italian music, or to read Dante's Vita Nuova, both of which she had said she did not like. It is probable that he asked her to do a number of things about this time which he did not especially care for, simply to see if she would comply; she always did.

"If she goes on in this sort of way," he thought, "never showing the least opposition, or personal moods different from mine, I really don't know where we shall end!"

But at last she did show both. It was in the evening, and she was at the piano; after one or two ballads, he asked her to sing a little English song he had found amongst her music, not printed, but in manuscript.

"Oh, that is nothing," she said, putting out her hand to take it from him. "I will sing this of Schumann's instead; it is much prettier."

But he maintained his point. "I like this better," he said. "I like the name; of course it is impossible, — but it is pleasant, — Semper Fidelis."

She took it, looked at it in silence for a moment, and then, without further reply, began to sing. There was nothing remarkable in the words or the music; she did not sing as well as usual either; she hurried the time.

SEMPER FIDELIS.

Dumb and unchanged my thoughts still round thee hover,
Nor will be moved;
E'en though I strive, my heart remains thy lover,
Though unbeloved;
Yet there is sad content in loyalty,
And, though the silent gift is naught to thee,
It changes never, —
Faithful forever.

This was the verse; but at the fifth line she faltered, stopped, and then, rising abruptly, left the room.

"Margaret is very uneven at times," said Miss Harrison apologetically, from her easy-chair.

"All interesting persons are uneven," he replied. He went over and took a seat beside his hostess, remaining half an hour longer; but as he went back to his hotel, he said to himself that Miss Stowe had been for many weeks the most even woman he had ever known, showing neither variation nor shadow of turning. She had been as even as a straight line.

On this account her sudden emotion made an impression upon him. The next day he mentioned that he was going to Trieste.

"Not Venice?" said Miss Harrison. "I thought everybody went to Venice."

"Venice," he replied, "is preëminently the place where one needs either an actual, tangible companionship of the dearest sort, or a memory like it. I, who have neither, keep well away from Venice!"

"I rather think, Mr. Morgan, that you have had pretty much what you wanted, in Venice or elsewhere," said Miss Harrison with a dry humor she sometimes showed. Here she was called from the room to see a poor woman whom she befriended; Miss Stowe and Morgan were left alone.

He was looking at her; he was noting what effect, if any, the tidings of his departure (he had named to-morrow) would have upon her. She had not been conventional; would she resort to conventionality now?

Her gaze was bent upon the floor; after a while she looked up. "Where shall you be this summer?" she said slowly. "Perhaps we shall be there too." Her eyes were fixed upon his face, her tone was hardly above a whisper.

Perhaps it was curiosity that made him do what he did; whether it was or not, mingled with it there was certainly a good deal of audacity. He rose, went to her, and took her hand. "Forgive me," he said; "I am in love with some one else."

It implied much. But had not her manner implied the same, or more?

She rose; they were both standing now.

"What do you mean?" she demanded, a light coming into her eyes, — eyes usually abstracted, almost dull.

"Only what I have said."

"Why should you say it to me?"

"I thought you might be — interested."

"You are mistaken. I am not in the least interested. Why should I be?"

"Are you not a little unkind?"

"Not more unkind than you are insolent."

She was very angry. He began to be a little angry himself.

"I ask your pardon with the deepest humility, Miss Stowe. The insolence of which you accuse me was as far as possible from my mind. If I thought you might be somewhat interested in what I have told you, it was because you have honored me with some small share of your attention during the past week or two; probably it has spoiled me."

"I have; and for a month or two, not a week or two. But there was a motive — It was an experiment."

"You have used me for experimental purposes, then?"

"Yes."

"I am immensely grateful to have been considered worthy of a part in an

experiment of yours, even although a passive one. May I ask if the experiment is ended?"

"It is."

"Since when? Since I made that confession about some one else?"

Miss Stowe's face was pale, her dark eyes were brilliant. "I knew all the while that you were in love — hopelessly in love — with Mrs. Lovell," she said, with a proud smile. "That was the reason that, for my experiment, I selected *you*."

A flush rose over his face as she spoke. "You thought you would have the greater triumph?" he asked.

"I thought nothing of the kind. I thought that I should be safe, because you would not respond."

"And you did not wish me to respond?"

"I did not."

"Excuse me, — we are speaking frankly, are we not? — but do you not contradict yourself somewhat? You say you did not wish me to respond; yet, have you not tried to make me?"

"That was not my object. It was but a necessary accompaniment of the experiment."

"And if I *had* responded?" he said, looking at her.

"I knew you could not. I knew quite well — I mean I could imagine quite well — how much you loved Beatrice. But it has all been a piece of folly upon my part, — I see it now." She turned away and went across to the piano. "I wish you would go now," she said in a low voice, vaguely turning over the music. "*I* cannot, because my aunt will think it strange to find me gone."

Instead of obeying her, he crossed the room and stood beside her; and then he saw in the twilight that her eyes were full of tears and her lips quivering, in spite of her effort to prevent it.

"Margaret," he said suddenly, and with a good deal of feeling in his voice, "I am not worth it! Indeed I am not!" And again he touched her hand.

But she drew it from him. "Are you by any chance imagining that my tears are for *you*?" she said in a low tone, but facing him like a creature at bay. "Have you interpreted me in that way? I have a right to know; speak!"

"I am at a loss to interpret you," he said, after a moment's silence.

"I will tell you the whole, then, — I must tell you; your mistake forces it from me." She paused, drew a quick breath, and then went on, rapidly. "I love some one else. I have been very unhappy. Just after you came, I received a letter which told me that he was soon to be married; he *is* married now. I had an illness in consequence. You may remember my illness? I made up my mind then that I would root out the feeling if possible, no matter at what cost of pain, and effort, and long patience. You came in my way. I knew you were deeply attached elsewhere" —

"How did you know it?" he said. He was leaning against the piano, watching her; she stood with her hands folded, and pressed so tightly together that he could see the force of the pressure.

"Never mind how; but quite simply and naturally. I said to myself that I would try to become interested in you, even if only to a small degree; I would do everything in my power to forward it. It would be an acquired interest; still, acquired interests can be deep. People can become interested in music, in pictures, in sports, in that way; why not then in persons also, since they are more human?"

"That is the very reason, — because they are too human," he answered.

But she did not heed. "I have studied you; I have tried to find the good in you; I have tried to believe in you, to idealize you. I have given every thought that I could control to you, and to you alone, for two long months," she said passionately, unlocking her hands,

reddened with their pressure against each other, and turning away.

"It has been a failure?"

"Complete."

"And if you had succeeded?" he asked, folding his arms as he leaned against the piano.

"I should have been glad and happy. I should never have seen *you* again, of course; but at least the miserable old feeling would have been laid at rest."

"And its place filled by another as miserable!"

"Oh no; it could never have been *that*," she said, with an emphasis of scorn.

"You tried a dangerous remedy, Margaret."

"Not so dangerous as the disease."

"A remedy may be worse than a disease. In spite of your scornful tone, permit me to tell you that if you had succeeded at all, it would have been in the end by loving me as you loved — I mean love — this other man. While I, in the mean time, am in love (as you are kind enough to inform me — hopelessly) with another woman! Is Beatrice a friend of yours?"

"My dearest friend."

"Has it never occurred to you that you were playing towards her rather a traitorous part?"

"Never."

"Supposing, during this experiment of yours, that I had fallen in love with you?"

"It would have been nothing to Beatrice if you had," responded Mrs. Lovell's friend instantly and loyally, although remembering, at the same moment, that Fiesole blush. Then, in a changed voice, and with a proud humility which was touching, she added, "It would have been quite impossible. Beatrice is the loveliest woman in the world; any one who had loved *her* would never think of me."

At this moment Miss Harrison's voice was heard in the hall; she was returning.

"Good-by," said Morgan. "I shall go to-morrow. You would rather have me go." He took her hand, held it an instant, and then raised it to his lips. "Good-by," he said again. "Forgive me, Margaret. And do not entirely — forget me."

When Miss Harrison returned, they were looking at the music on the piano. A few moments later he took leave.

"I am sorry he has gone," said Miss Harrison. "What in the world is he going to do at Trieste? Well, so goes life! nothing but partings! One thing is a consolation, however, at least to me; the grandson of old Adam did not turn out a disappointment, after all."

"I do not think I am a judge," replied Miss Stowe.

In June Miss Harrison went northward to Paris, her niece accompanying her. They spent the summer in Switzerland; in the autumn returned to Paris; and in December went southward to Naples and Rome.

Mrs. Lovell had answered Margaret's letter in June. The six weeks of yachting had been charming; the yacht belonged to an English gentleman, who had a country-seat in Devonshire. She herself, by the way, might be in Devonshire during the summer; it was so quiet there. Could not Miss Harrison be induced to come to Devonshire? That would be *so* delightful. It had been extremely difficult to wear deep mourning at sea; but of course she had persisted in it. Much of it had been completely ruined; she had been obliged to buy more. Yes, — it *was* amusing, — her meeting Trafford Morgan. And so unexpected, of course. Did she like him? No, the letter need not be returned. If it troubled her to have it, she might destroy it; perhaps it was as well it should be destroyed. There were some such pleasant qualities in English life; there was not so much opportunity, perhaps, as in America —

"That blush meant nothing, then, after all," thought the reader, lifting her eyes from the page and looking musingly at a picture on the wall. "She said it meant only a lack of iron; and, as Beatrice always tells the truth, she did mean that, probably, and not irony, as I supposed." She sat thinking for a few moments, and then went back to the letter. — There was not so much opportunity, perhaps, as in America; but there was more stability, more certainty that things would continue to go on. There were various occurrences which she would like to tell; but she never wrote that sort of thing, — as Margaret knew. If she would only come to Devonshire for the summer, — and so forth, and so forth.

But Beatrice did sometimes write "that sort of thing" after all. During the next February, in Rome, after a long silence, Margaret received a letter from her, which brought the tidings of her engagement. He was an Englishman. He had a country-seat in Devonshire. He owned a yacht. Beatrice seemed very happy. "We shall not be married until next winter," she wrote. "I would not consent, of course, to anything earlier. I have consistently endeavored to do what was right from the beginning, and shall not waver now. But by next January there can be no criticism, and I suppose that will be the time. How I wish you were here to advise me about a hundred things. Besides, I want you to know him; you will be sure to like him. He is" — and so forth, and so forth.

"She is following out her destiny," thought the reader in Rome.

In March, Miss Harrison found the Eternal City too warm, and moved northward as far as Florence. Madame Ferri was delighted to see them again; she came five times during the first three days to say so.

"You will find *so* many whom you knew last year, here again, as well as yourselves," she said enthusiastically. "We shall have some of our *charming* old reunions. Let me see, — I think I can tell you." And she ran over a list of names, among them that of "Mr. Morgan."

"What, not the grandson of Adam?" said Miss Harrison.

"He is not *quite* so old as that, is he?" said Madame Ferri, laughing. "It is the one who dined with you several times last year, I believe, — Mr. Trafford Morgan. I shall have great pleasure in telling him this very day that you are here."

"Do you know whether he is to remain long?" said Miss Stowe, who had not before spoken.

"I am sorry to say he is not; Mr. Morgan is always an addition, I think, — don't you? But he told me only yesterday that he was going this week to — to Tarascon, I think he said."

"Trieste and Tarascon, — he selects the most extraordinary places!" said Miss Harrison. "The next time it will be Tartarus."

Madame Ferri was overcome with mirth. "*Dear* Miss Harrison, you are *too* droll! *Is n't* she, dear Miss Stowe?"

"He probably chooses his names at random," said Miss Stowe, with indifference.

The next day, at the Pitti, she met him. She was alone, and returned his salutation coldly. He was with some ladies who were standing near, looking at the Madonna of the Chair. He merely asked how Miss Harrison was, and said he should give himself the pleasure of coming to see her very soon; then he bowed and returned to his friends. Not long afterwards she saw them all leave the gallery together.

Half an hour later she was standing in front of one of Titian's portraits, when a voice close beside her said, "Ah, — the young man in black. You are not admiring it?"

There had been almost a crowd in the

gorgeous rooms that morning. She had stood elbow to elbow with so many persons that she no longer noticed them; Trafford Morgan had been able, therefore, to approach and stand beside her for several minutes without attracting her recognition. As he spoke she turned, and, in answer to his smile, gave an even slighter bow than before; it was hardly more than a movement of the eyelids. Two English girls, with large hats, sweet, shy eyes, and pink cheeks, who were standing close beside them, turned away towards the left for a minute, to look at another picture.

"Do not treat me badly," he said. "I need kindness. I am not very happy."

"I can understand that," she answered. Here the English girls came back again.

"I think you are wrong in admiring it," he said, looking at the portrait; "it is a quite impossible picture. A youth with that small, delicate head and face could never have had those shoulders; they are the shoulders of quite another type of man. This is some boy whom Titian wished to flatter; but he was artist enough to try and hide the flattery by that overcoat. The face has no calm; you would not have admired it in life."

"On the contrary, I should have admired it greatly," replied Miss Stowe. "I should have adored it. I should have adored the eyes."

"Surely there is nothing in them but a sort of pugnacity."

"Whatever it is, it is delightful."

The English girls now turned away towards the right.

"You are quite changed," he said, looking at her.

"Yes, I think I am. I am much more agreeable. Every one will tell you so; even Madame Ferri, who is obliged to reconcile it with my having been always more agreeable than any one in the world, you know. I have become lighter. I am no longer heavy."

"You mean you are no longer serious."

"That is it. I used to be absurdly serious. But it is an age since we last met. You were going to Trieste, were you not? I hope you found it agreeable?"

"It is not an age; it is a year."

"Oh, a great deal can happen in a year," said Miss Stowe, turning away.

She was as richly dressed as ever, and not quite so plainly. Her hair was arranged in little rippling waves low down upon her forehead, which made her look, if not what might be called more worldly, at least more fashionable, since previously she had worn it arranged with a simplicity which was neither. Owing to this new arrangement of her hair, her eyes looked larger and darker.

He continued to walk beside her for some moments, and then, as she came upon a party of friends, he took leave.

In the evening he called upon Miss Harrison, and remained an hour. Miss Stowe was not at home. The next day he sent to Miss Harrison a beautiful basket of flowers.

"He knows we always keep the rooms full of them," remarked Miss Stowe, rather disdainfully.

"All the same, I like the attention," said Miss Harrison. And she sent him an invitation to dinner. She liked to have one guest.

He came. During the evening he asked Miss Stowe to sing. "I have lost my voice," she answered.

"Yes," said Miss Harrison, "it is really remarkable; Margaret, although she seems so well, has not been able to sing for months, — indeed, for a full year. It is quite sad."

"I am not sad about it, Aunt Ruth; I am relieved. I never sang well, — I had not voice enough. There was really nothing in it but expression; and that was all pretense."

"You are trying to make us think you very artificial," said Morgan.

"I can make you think what I please, probably. I can follow several lines of conduct, one after the other, and make you believe them all." She spoke lightly; her general tone was much lighter than formerly, as she herself had said.

"Do you ever walk in the Boboli Garden now?" he asked, later.

"Occasionally; but it is a dull place. And I do not walk as much as I did; I drive with my aunt."

"Yes, Margaret has grown indolent," said Miss Harrison; "and it seems to agree with her. She has more color than formerly; she looks well."

"Wonderfully," said Morgan. "But you are thinner than you were," he added, turning towards her.

"And darker!" she answered, laughing. "Mr. Morgan does not admire arrangements in black and white, Aunt Ruth; do not embarrass him." She wore that evening a white dress, unrelieved by any color.

"I see you are bent upon being unkind," he said. It was supposed to be a society remark.

"Not the least in the world," she answered, in the same tone.

He met her several times in company, and had short conversations with her. Then, one afternoon, he came upon her unexpectedly in the Cascine; she was strolling down the broad path, alone.

"So you do walk sometimes, after all," he said.

"Never. I am only strolling. I drove here with Aunt Ruth, but, as she came upon a party of American friends who are going to-morrow, I gave up my place, and they are driving around together for a while, and no doubt settling the entire affairs of Westchester County."

"I am glad she met them; I am glad to find you alone. I have something I wish much to say to you."

"Such a beginning always frightens me. Pray postpone it."

"On the contrary, I shall hasten it. I must make the most of this rare opportunity. Do you remember when you did me the honor, Miss Stowe, to make me the subject of an experiment?"

"You insist upon recalling that piece of folly?" she said, opening her parasol. Her tone was composed and indifferent.

"I recall it because I wish to base something upon it. I wish to ask you — to allow yourself to be passively the subject of an experiment on *my* part, an experiment of the same nature."

She glanced at him; he half smiled. "Did you imagine, then, that mine was in earnest?" she said, with a fine, light scorn, light as air.

"I never imagine anything. Imaginations are useless."

"Not so useless as experiments. Let yours go, and tell me rather what you found to like in — Trieste."

"I suppose you know that I went to England?"

"I know nothing. But yes, — I do know that you are going to — Tarascon."

"I shall not go if you will permit what I have asked."

"Is n't it rather suddenly planned?" she said ironically. "You did not know we were coming."

"Very suddenly. I have thought of it only since yesterday."

They had strolled into a narrow path which led by one of those patches of underwood of which there are several in the Cascine, little bosky places carefully preserved in a tangled wildness which is so pretty and amusing to American eyes, accustomed to the stretch of real forests.

"You don't know how I love these little patches," said Miss Stowe. "There is such a good faith about them; they are charming."

"You were always fond of nature, I remember. I used to tell you that art was better."

"Ah — did you?" she said, her eyes following the flight of a bird.

"You have forgotten very completely in one year."

"Yes, I think I have. I always forget, you know, what it is not agreeable to remember. But I must go back; Aunt Ruth will be waiting." They turned.

"I will speak more plainly," said Morgan. "I went to England during July last, — that is, I followed Mrs. Lovell. She was in Devonshire. Quite recently I have learned that she has become engaged in — Devonshire, and is soon to be married there. I am naturally rather down about it. I am seeking some other interest. I should like to try your plan for a while, and build up an interest in — you."

Miss Stowe's lip curled. "The plans are not alike," she said. "Yours is badly contrived. *I* did not tell *you* beforehand what I was endeavoring to do!"

"I am obliged to tell you. You would have discovered it."

"Discovered what a pretense it was? That is true. A woman can act a part better than a man. *You* did not discover! And what am I to do in this little comedy of yours?"

"Nothing. It is in truth nothing to you; you have told me that, even when you made a great effort towards that especial object, it was impossible to get up the slightest interest in me. Do not take a violent dislike to me; that is all."

"And if it is already taken?"

"I shall have to conquer that. What I meant was — do not take a fresh one."

"There is nothing like precedent, and therefore I repeat your question: what if you should succeed, — I mean as regards yourself?" she said, looking at him with a satirical expression.

"It is my earnest wish to succeed."

"You do not add, as I did, that in case you do succeed, you will of course never see me again, but that at least the miserable old feeling will be at rest?"

"I do not add it."

"And at the conclusion, when it has failed, shall you tell me that the cause of failure was — the inevitable comparisons?"

"Beatrice is extremely lovely," he replied, turning his head and gazing at the Arno, shining through an opening in the hedge. "I do not attempt to pretend, even to myself, that she is not the loveliest woman I ever knew."

"Since you do not pretend it to yourself, you will not pretend it to me."

She spoke without interrogation; but he treated the words as a question. "Why should I?" he said. And then he was silent.

"There is Aunt Ruth," said Miss Stowe; "I see the horses. She is probably wondering what has become of me."

"You have not altogether denied me," he said, just before they reached the carriage. "I assure you I will not be in the least importunate. Take a day or two to consider. After all, if there is no one upon whom it can really infringe (of course I know you have admirers; I have even heard their names), why should you not find it even a little amusing?"

Miss Stowe turned towards him, and a peculiar expression came into her eyes as they met his. "I am not sure but that I shall find it so," she answered. And then they joined Miss Harrison.

The day or two had passed. There had been no formal question asked, and no formal reply given; but as Miss Stowe had not absolutely forbidden it, the experiment may be said to have been begun. It was soon reported in Florence that Trafford Morgan was one of the suitors for the hand of the heiress; and, being a candidate, he was of course subjected to the searching light of Public Inquiry. Public Inquiry discovered that he was thirty-eight years of age; that he had but a small income; that he was indolent, indifferent, and cynical. Not being able to find any open vices, Public

Inquiry considered that he was too *blasé* to have them; he had probably exhausted them all long before. All this Madame Ferri repeated to Miss Harrison, not because she was in the least opposed to Mr. Morgan, but simply as part of her general task as gatherer and disseminator.

"Trafford Morgan is not a saint, but he is well enough in his way," replied Miss Harrison. "I am not at all sure that a saint would be agreeable in the family."

Madame Ferri was much amused by this; but she carried away the impression also that Miss Harrison favored the suitor.

In the mean time, nothing could be more quiet than the manner of the supposed suitor when he was with Miss Stowe. He now asked questions of her; when they went to the churches, he asked her impressions of the architecture; when they visited the galleries, he asked her opinions of the pictures. He inquired what books she liked, and why she liked them; and sometimes he slowly repeated her replies.

This last habit annoyed her. "I wish you would not do that," she said, with some irritation. "It is like being forced to look at one's self in a mirror."

"I do it to analyze them," he answered. "I am so dense, you know; it takes me a long time to understand. When you say, for instance, that Romola is not a natural character because her love for Tito ceases, I, who think that the unnatural part is that she should ever have loved him, naturally dwell upon the remark."

"She would have continued to love him, in life. Beauty is all powerful."

"I did not know that women cared much for it," he answered. Then, after a moment, "Do not be too severe upon me," he added; "I am doing my best."

She made no reply.

"I thought certainly you would have answered, 'By contrast?'" he said, smiling. "But you are not so satirical as you were. I cannot make you angry with me."

"Have you tried?"

"Of course I have tried. It would be a step gained to move you, — even in that way."

"I thought your experiment was to be all on one side?" she said. They were sitting in a shady corner of the cloisters of San Marco; she was leaning back in her chair, following with the point of her parasol the lines of the Latin inscription on the slab at her feet, over an old monk's last resting-place.

"I am not as consistent as I should be," he answered, rising and sauntering off, with his hands in the pockets of his short morning-coat, to look at St. Peter the Martyr.

At another time they were in the Michael-Angelo chapel of San Lorenzo. It was past the hour for closing, but Morgan had bribed the custode to allow them to remain, and the old man had closed the door and gone away, leaving them alone with the wondrous marbles.

"What do they mean?" he said. "Tell me."

"They mean fate, our sad human fate. The beautiful Dawn in all the pain of waking; the stern determination of the Day; the recognition of failure in Evening; and the lassitude of dreary, hopeless sleep in Night. It is one way of looking at life."

"But not your way?"

"Oh, I have no way; I am too limited. But genius takes a broader view, and genius, I suppose, must always be sad. People with that endowment, I have noticed, are almost always very unhappy."

He was sitting beside her, and, as she spoke, he saw a little flush rise in her cheeks; she was remembering when Mrs. Lovell had used the same words, although in another connection.

"We have never spoken directly, or

at any length, of Beatrice," she said suddenly. "I wish you would tell me about her."

"Here?"

"Yes, here and now; Lorenzo shall be your judge."

"I am not afraid of Lorenzo. He is not a god; on the contrary, he has all our deepest humanity on his musing face; it is for this reason that he impresses us so powerfully. As it is the first time you have expressed any wish, Miss Stowe, I suppose I must obey it."

"Will it be difficult?"

"It is always difficult, is it not, for a man to speak of an unhappy love?" he said, leaning his elbow on the back of the seat, and shading his eyes with his hand as he looked at her.

"I will excuse you."

"I have not asked to be excused. I first met Mrs. Lovell in Sicily. I was with her almost constantly during five weeks. She is as lovable as a rose, — as a peach, — as a child." He paused.

"Your comparisons are rather remarkable," said Miss Stowe, her eyes resting upon the grand massiveness of Day.

"They are truthful. I fell in love with her; and I told her so because there was that fatal thing, an opportunity, — that is, a garden-seat, starlight, and the perfume of flowers. Of course these were irresistible."

"Indeed?"

"Do not be contemptuous. It is possible that you may not have been exposed to the force of the combination, as yet. She rebuked me with that lovely gentle softness of hers, and then she went away; the Sicilian days were over. I wrote to her" —

He was sitting in the same position, with his hand shading his eyes, looking at her; as he spoke the last phrase he perceived that she colored, and colored deeply.

"You knew the story generally," he said, dropping his arm and leaning forward. "But it is not possible you saw that letter!"

She rose and walked across, as if to get a nearer view of Day. "I admire it so much!" she said after a moment. "If it should stretch out that great right arm, it could crush us to atoms." And she turned towards him again.

As she did, she saw that he had colored also; a deep dark flush had risen in his face, and covered even his forehead.

"I am safe, — very safe!" he said. "After reading such a letter as that, written to another woman, you are not likely to bestow much regard upon the writer, try as he may!"

Miss Stowe looked at him. "You are overacting," she said coldly. "It is not in your part to pretend to care so soon. It was to be built up gradually."

"Lorenzo understands me," he said, recovering himself. "Shall I go on?"

"I think I must go, now," she answered, declining a seat; "it is late."

"In a moment. Let me finish, now that I have begun. I had thought of returning to America; indeed, Beatrice had advised it; she thought I was becoming expatriated. But I gave it up and remained in Italy because I did not wish to appear too much her slave (women do not like men who obey them too well, you know). After this effort, I was consistent enough to follow her to England. I found her in — Devonshire, lovelier than ever; and I was again fascinated; I was even ready to accept beforehand all the rules and embargo of the strictest respect to the memory of Mr. Lovell."

Miss Stowe's eyes were upon Day; but here, involuntarily, she glanced towards her companion. His face remained unchanged.

"I was much in love with her. She allowed me no encouragement. But I did not give up a sort of vague hope I had, until this recent tidings. Then, of

course, I knew that all was over for me."

"I am sorry for you," replied Miss Stowe after a pause, still looking at Day.

"Of course I have counted upon that, — upon your sympathy. I knew that you would understand."

"Spare me the quotation, A fellow-feeling, and so forth," she said, moving towards the door. "I am going; I feel as though we had already desecrated too long this sacred place."

"It is no desecration. The highest heights of art, as well as of life, belong to love," he said, as they went out into the cool low hall, paved with the grave-stones of the Medici.

"Don't you always think of them lying down below?" she said. "Giovanni in his armor, and Lenore of Toledo in her golden hair?"

"Since when have you become so historical? They were a wicked race."

"And since when have you become so virtuous?" she answered. "They were at least successful."

Time passed. It has a way of passing rapidly in Florence; although each day is long, and slow, and full, and delightful, a month flies. Again the season was waning. It was now believed that Mr. Morgan had been successful, although nothing definite was known. It was remarked how unusually well Miss Stowe looked; her eyes were so bright, and she had so much color, that she really looked brilliant. Madame Ferri repeated this to Miss Harrison.

"Margaret was always brilliant," said her aunt.

"Oh, extremely!" said Madame Ferri.

"Only people never found it out," added Miss Harrison.

She herself maintained a calm and uninquiring demeanor. Sometimes she was with her niece and her niece's supposed suitor, and sometimes not. She continued to receive him with the same affability which she had bestowed upon him from the first, and occasionally she invited him to dinner and to drive. She made no comment upon the frequency of his visits, or the length of his conversations upon the little balcony in the evening, where the plash of the fountain came faintly up from below. In truth she had no cause for solicitude; nothing could be more tranquil than the tone of the two talkers. Nothing more was said about Mrs. Lovell; conversation had sunk back into the old impersonal channel.

"You are very even," Morgan said one evening. "You do not seem to have any moods. I noticed it last year."

"One is even," she replied, "when one is" —

"Indifferent," he suggested.

She did not contradict him.

Two things she refused to do: she would not sing, and she would not go to the Boboli Garden.

"As I am especially fond of those tall, ceremonious old hedges and serene statues, you cut me off from a real pleasure," said Morgan.

It was the evening of the 16th of May; they were sitting by the open window; Miss Harrison was not present.

"You can go there after we have gone," she said, smiling. "We leave to-morrow."

"You leave to-morrow!" he repeated. Then, after an instant, "It is immensely kind to tell me beforehand," he said ironically. "I should have thought you would have left it until after your departure!"

She made no reply, but fanned herself slowly with the beautiful gray fan.

"I suppose you consider that the month is more than ended, and that you are free?"

"You have had all you asked for, Mr. Morgan."

"And therefore I have now only to thank you for your generosity, and let you go."

"I think so."

"You do not care to know the result of my experiment, — whether it has been a failure or a success?" he said. "You told me the result of yours."

"I did not mean to tell you. It was forced from me by your misunderstanding."

"Misunderstandings, because so slight that one cannot attack them, are horrible things. Let there be none between us now."

"There is none."

"I do not know." He leaned back in his chair and looked up at the soft darkness of the Italian night. "I have one more favor to ask," he said presently. "You have granted me many; grant me this. At what hour do you go, to-morrow?"

"In the afternoon."

"Give me a little time with you in the Boboli Garden in the morning."

"You are an accomplished workman, Mr. Morgan; you want to finish with a polish; you do not like to leave rough ends. Be content; I will accept the intention as carried out, and suppose that all the last words have been beautifully and shiningly spoken. That will do quite as well."

"Put any construction upon it you please," he answered. "But consent."

But it was with great difficulty that he obtained that consent.

"There is really nothing you can say that I care to hear," she declared at last.

"The king is dead! My time is ended, evidently! But, as there *is* something you can say which *I* care to hear, I again urge you to consent."

Miss Stowe rose, and passed through the long window into the lighted empty room, decked as usual with many flowers; here she stood, looking at him, as he entered also.

"I have tried my best to prevent it," she said.

"You have."

"And you still insist?"

"I do."

"Very well; I consent. But you will not forget that I tried," she said. "Good-night."

The next morning at ten, as he entered the old amphitheatre, he saw her; she was sitting on one of the upper stone seats, under a statue of Diana.

"I would rather go to our old place," he said, as he came up; "the seat under the tree, you know."

"I like this better."

"As you prefer, of course. It will be more royal, more in state; but, to be in accordance with it, you should have been clothed in something majestic, instead of that soft, yielding hue."

"That is hardly necessary," she answered.

"By which you mean, I suppose, that your face is not yielding. And indeed it is not."

She was dressed in cream-color from head to foot; she held open, poised on one shoulder, a large, heavily-fringed, cream-colored parasol. Above this soft drapery and under this soft shade, the darkness of her hair and eyes was doubly apparent.

He took a seat beside her, removed his hat, and let the breeze play over his head and face; it was a warm summer morning, and they were in the shadow.

"I believe I was to tell you the result of my experiment," he said after a while, breaking the silence which she did not break.

"You wished it; I did not ask it."

If she was cool, he was calm; he was not at all as he had been the night before; then he had seemed hurried and irritated, now he was quiet. "The experiment has succeeded," he said deliberately. "I find myself often thinking of you; I like to be with you; I feel when with you a sort of satisfied content. What I want to ask is, — I may as well say it at once, — Will not this do as the basis of a better understanding between us?"

She was gazing at the purple slopes of Monte Morello opposite. "It might," she answered.

He turned; her profile was towards him, he could not see her eyes.

"I shall be quite frank," he continued; "under the circumstances it is my only way. You have loved some one else. I have loved some one else. We have both been unhappy. We should therefore, I think, have a peculiar sympathy for and comprehension of each other. It has seemed to me that these, combined with my real liking for you, might be a sufficient foundation for — let us call it another experiment. I ask you to make this experiment, Margaret; I ask you to marry me. If it fails, — if you are not happy, — I promise not to hold you in the slightest degree. You shall have your liberty untrammeled, and, at the same time, all shall be arranged so as to escape comment. I will be with you enough to save appearances; that is all. In reality you shall be entirely free. I think you can trust my word."

"I shall have but little from my aunt," was her answer, her eyes still fixed upon the mountain. "I am not her heiress, as you suppose."

"You mean that to be severe; but it falls harmless. It is true that I did suppose you were her heiress; but the fact that you are not makes no difference in my request. We shall not be rich, but we can live; it shall be my pleasure to make you comfortable."

"I do not quite see why you ask this," she said, with the same slow utterance and her eyes turned away. "You do not love me; I am not beautiful; I have no fortune. What, then, do you gain?"

"I gain," — he said, "I gain" — then he paused. "You would not like me to tell you," he added; and his voice was changed.

"I beg you to tell me." Her lips were slightly compressed, a tremor had seized her; she seemed to be exerting all her powers of self-control.

He watched her a moment, and then, leaning towards her while a new and beautiful expression of tenderness stole into his eyes, "I gain, Margaret," he said, "the greatest gift that can be given to a man on this earth, a gift I long for, — a wife who really and deeply loves me."

The hot color flooded her face and throat; she rose, turning upon him her blazing eyes. "I was but waiting for this," she said, her words rushing forth, one upon the other, with the unheeding rapidity of passion. "I felt sure that it would come. With the deeply-rooted egotism of a man you believe that I love you, you have believed it from the beginning. It was because I knew this, that I allowed this experiment of yours to go on. I resisted the temptation at first; but it was too strong for me; you yourself made it so. It was a chance to make you conscious of your supreme error; a chance to have my revenge. And I yielded. You said, not long ago, that I was even. I answered that one was even when one was — You said 'indifferent,' and I did not contradict you. But the real sentence was that one was even when one was pursuing a purpose. I have pursued a purpose. This was mine: to make you put into words your egregious vanity, to make you stand convicted of your dense and vast mistake. But towards the end, a better impulse rose, and the game did not seem worth the candle. I said to myself that I would go away without giving you after all the chance to stultify yourself, the chance to exhibit clearly your insufferable and amazing conceit. But you insisted, and the impulse vanished; I allowed you to go on to the end. *I* love you! *You!*"

He had risen, also; they stood side by side under the statue of Diana; some people had come into the amphitheatre below. He had turned slightly pale as

she uttered these bitter words, but he remained quite silent. He still held his hat in his hand; his eyes were turned away.

"Have you nothing to say?" she asked, after some moments had passed.

"I think there is nothing," he answered without turning.

Then again there was a silence.

"You probably wish to go," he said, breaking it; "do not let me detain you." And he began to go down the steps, pausing, however, as the descent was somewhat awkward, to give her his hand.

To the little Italian party below, looking at the Egyptian obelisk, he seemed the picture of chivalry, as, with bared head, he assisted her down; and as they passed the obelisk, these children of the country looked upon them as two of the rich Americans, the lady dressed like a picture, the gentleman distinguished, but both without a gesture or an interest, and coldly silent and pale.

He did not accompany her home. "Shall I go with you?" he said, breaking the silence as they reached the exit.

"No, thanks. Please call a carriage."

He signaled to a driver who was near, and assisted her into one of the little rattling Florence phaetons.

"Good-by," she said, when she was seated.

He lifted his hat. "Lung' Arno Nuovo," he said to the driver.

And the carriage rolled away.

Countries attract us in different ways. We are comfortable in England, musical in Germany, amused in Paris (Paris is a country), and idyllic in Switzerland; but when it comes to the affection, Italy holds the heart, — we keep going back to her. Miss Harrison, sitting in her carriage on the heights of Bello Sguardo, was thinking this as she gazed down upon Florence, and the valley below. It was early in the next autumn, — the last of September; and she was alone.

A phaeton passed her and turned down the hill; but she had recognized its occupant as he passed, and called his name: "Mr. Morgan?"

He turned, saw her, bowed, and after a moment's hesitation ordered his driver to stop, sprang out, and came back to speak to her.

"How in the world do you happen to be in Florence at this time of year?" she said cordially, giving him her hand. "There is n't a soul in the place."

"That is the reason I came."

"And the reason we did, too," she said, laughing. "I am delighted to have met you; one soul is very acceptable. You must come and see me immediately. I hope you are going to stay."

"Thanks; you are very kind. But I leave to-morrow morning."

"Then you must come to-night; come to dinner at seven. It is impossible you should have another engagement when there is no one to be engaged to, — unless it be the pictures; I believe they do not go away for the summer."

"I really have an engagement, Miss Harrison; you are very kind, but I am forced to decline."

"Dismiss your carriage, then, and drive back with me; I will set you down at your hotel. It will be a visit of some sort."

He obeyed. Miss Harrison's fine horses started, and moved with slow stateliness down the winding road, where the beggars had not yet begun to congregate; it was not "the season" for the beggars, they were still at the seashore.

Miss Harrison talked on various subjects. They had been in Switzerland and it had rained continuously; they had seen nothing but fog. They had come over the St. Gothard and their carriage had broken down. They had been in Venice and had found malaria there. They had been in Padua, Vero-

na, and Bologna, and all three had become frightfully modern and iconoclastic. Nothing was in the least satisfactory, and Margaret had not been well; she was quite anxious about her.

Mr. Morgan "hoped" that it was nothing serious.

"I don't know whether it is or not," replied Miss Harrison. "Margaret is rather a serious sort of a person, I think."

She looked at him, as if for confirmation; but he did not pursue the subject. Instead, he asked after her own health.

"Oh, I am as usual. It is only your real invalids who are always well; they enjoy their poor health, you know. And what have you been doing since I last saw you? I hope nothing out of the way. Let me see, — Trieste and Tarascon; you have probably been in — Transylvania?"

"That would be somewhat out of the way, would n't it? But I have not been there; I have been in various nearer places, engaged rather systematically in amusing myself."

"Did you succeed? If you did you are a man of genius. One must have a rare genius, I think, to amuse one's self in that way at forty. Of course I mean thirty-five, you know; but forty is a better conversational word, — it classifies. And you were amused?"

"Immensely."

"So much so that you have to come to Florence in September to rest after it!"

"Yes."

Miss Harrison talked on. He listened, and made the necessary replies. The carriage entered the city, crossed the Carraja bridge, and turned towards his hotel.

"Can you not come for half an hour this evening, after your engagement is over?" she said. "I shall be all alone, for Margaret cannot be there before midnight; she went into the country this morning with Madame Ferri, — some sort of a *fête* at a villa, a native Florentine affair. You have not asked much about her, I think, considering how constantly you were with her last spring," she added, looking at him calmly.

"I have been remiss; pardon it."

"It is only forgetfulness, of course. That is not a fault nowadays; it is a virtue, and, what is more, highly fashionable. But there is one little piece of news I must tell you about my niece: she is going to be married."

"That is not little; it is great. Please present to her my sincere good wishes and congratulations."

"I am sorry you cannot present them yourself. But at least you can come and see *me* for a little while this evening — say about ten. The grandson of your grandfather should be very civil to old Ruth Harrison for old times' sake." Here the carriage stopped at his door. "Remember, — I shall expect you," she said as he took leave.

At about the hour she had named, he went to see her; he found her alone, knitting. It was one of her idiosyncrasies to knit stockings "for the poor." No doubt there were "poor" enough to wear them; but as she made a great many, and as they were always of children's size and black, her friends sometimes thought, with a kind of amused dismay, of the regiment of little funereal legs running about, for which she was responsible.

He had nothing especial to say, his intention was to remain the shortest time possible; he could see the hands of the clock, and he noted their progress, every now and then, through the twenty minutes he had set for himself.

Miss Harrison talked on various subjects, but said nothing more concerning her niece; nor did he, on his side, ask a question. After a while she came to fashions in art. "It is the most curious thing," she said, "how people obediently follow each other along a particular

road, like a flock of sheep, no matter what roads, equally good and possibly better, open to the right and the left. Now there are the wonderfully spirited frescoes of Masaccio at the Carmine, frescoes which were studied and copied by Raphael himself and Michael Angelo. Yet that church has no vogue; it is not fashionable to go there; Ruskin has not written a maroon-colored pamphlet about it, and Baedeker gives it but a scant quarter-page, while the other churches have three and four. Now it seems to me that" —

But what it seemed, Morgan never knew, because here she paused as the door opened. "Ah, there is Margaret after all," she said. "I did not expect her for three hours."

Miss Stowe came across the large room, throwing back her white shawl and taking off her little plumed hat as she came. She did not perceive that any one was present save her aunt; the light was not bright and the visitor sat in the shadow.

"It was very stupid," she said. "Do not urge me to go again." And then she saw him.

He rose, and bowed. After an instant's delay she spoke his name, and put out her hand, which he took as formally as she gave it. Miss Harrison was voluble. She was "so pleased" that Margaret had returned earlier than was expected; she was "so pleased" that the visitor happened to be still there. She seemed indeed to be pleased with everything, and talked for them both; in truth, save for replies to her questions, they were quite silent. The visitor remained but a short quarter of an hour, and then took leave, saying good-by at the same time, since he was to go early in the morning.

"To Trent?" said Miss Harrison.

"To Tadmor, I think, this time," he answered, smiling.

The next morning opened with a dull gray rain. Morgan was late in rising, missed his train, and was obliged to wait until the afternoon. About eleven he went out, under an umbrella, and after a while, tired of the constant signals and clattering followings of the hackmen, who could not comprehend why a rich foreigner should walk, he went into the Duomo. The vast church, never light even on a bright day, was now sombre, almost dark, the few little twinkling tapers, like stars, on an altar at the upper end, only serving to make the darkness more visible. He walked down to the closed western entrance, across whose wall outside rises slowly, day by day, the new façade under its straw-work screen. Here he stood still, looking up the dim expanse, with the dusky shadows, like great winged, formless ghosts, hovering over him.

One of the south doors, the one near the choir, was open, and through it a slender ray of gray daylight came in, and tried to cross the floor. But its courage soon failed in that breadth and gloom, and it died away before it had gone ten feet. A blind beggar sat in a chair at this entrance, his patient face faintly outlined against the ray; there seemed to be no one else in the church save the sacristan, whose form could be dimly seen moving about, renewing the lights burning before the far-off chapels.

The solitary visitor strolled back and forth in the shadow. After a while he noted a figure entering through the ray. It was that of a woman; it had not the outlines of the usual church-beggar; it did not stoop or cringe; it was erect and slender, and stepped lightly; it was coming down towards the western end, where he was pacing to and fro. He stopped and stood still, watching it. It continued to approach, — and at last brushed against him. Coming in from the daylight, it could see nothing in the heavy shadow.

"Excuse me, Miss Stowe," he said; "I should have spoken. My eyes are accustomed to this light, and I recog-

nized you; but of course you could not see me."

She had started back as she touched him; now she moved away still farther.

"It is grandly solitary here on a rainy day, is n't it?" he continued. "I used often to come here during a storm. It makes one feel as if already disembodied, — as if he were a shade, wandering on the gray, unknown outskirts of another world."

She had now recovered herself, and, turning, began to walk back towards the ray at the upper door. He accompanied her. But the Duomo is vast, and cannot be crossed in a minute. He went on talking about the shadows; then stopped.

"I am glad of this opportunity to give you my good wishes, Miss Stowe," he said, as they went onward. "I hope you will be quite happy."

"I hope the same, certainly," she answered. "Yet I fail to see any especially new reason for good wishes from you, just at present."

"Ah, you do not know that I know. But Miss Harrison told me, yesterday, — told me that you were soon to be married. If you have never forgiven me, in the light of your present happiness I think you should do so now."

She had stopped. "My aunt told you?" she said, while he was still speaking. But now, as he paused, she walked on. He could not see her face; although approaching the ray, they were still in the shadow, and her head was turned from him.

"As to forgiveness, it is I who should ask forgiveness from you," she said, after some delay, during which there was no sound but their footsteps on the mosaic pavement.

"Yes, you were very harsh. But I forgave you long ago. I was a dolt, and deserved your sharp words. But I want very much to hear *you* say that you forgive *me*."

"There is nothing to forgive."

"That is gently spoken. It is your marriage present to me, and I feel the better for it."

A minute later they had reached the ray, and the door. He could see her face now. "How ill you look!" he said, involuntarily. "I noticed it last evening. It is not conventional to say so, but it is at least a real regret. He should take better care of you."

The blind beggar, hearing their footsteps, had put out his hand. "Do not go yet," said Morgan, giving him a franc. "See how it is raining outside. Walk with me once around the whole interior for the sake of the pleasant part of our Florentine days, — for there *was* a pleasant part; it will be our last walk together."

She assented silently, and they turned into the shadow again.

"I am going to make a confession," he said, as they passed the choir; "it can make no difference now, and I prefer that you should know it. I did not realize it myself at the time, but I see now — that is, I have discovered since yesterday — that I was in love with you, more or less, from the beginning."

She made no answer, and they passed under Michael Angelo's grand, unfinished statue, and came around on the other side.

"Of course I was fascinated with Beatrice; in one way I was her slave. Still, when I said to you that 'Forgive me; I am in love with some one else,' I really think it was more to see what you would say or do, than any feeling of loyalty to her."

Again she said nothing. They went down the north aisle.

"I wish you would tell me," he said, leaving the subject of himself and turning to her, "that you are fully and really happy in this marriage of yours. I hope you are, with all my heart; but I should like to hear it from your own lips."

She made a gesture as if of refusal;

but he went on. "Of course, I know I have no right; I ask it as a favor."

They were now in deep obscurity, almost darkness; but something seemed to tell him that she was suffering.

"You are not going to do that wretched thing, — marry without love?" he said, stopping abruptly. "Do not, Margaret, do not! I know you better than you know yourself, and you will not be able to bear it. Some women can; but you could not. You have too deep feelings, — too" —

He did not finish the sentence, for she had turned from him suddenly, and was walking across the dusky space in the centre of the great temple whose foundations were so grandly laid six centuries ago.

But he followed her and stopped her, almost by force, taking both her hands in his. "You must not do this," he said; "you must not marry in that way. It is dangerous; it is horrible; for you, it is a crime." Then, as he stood close to her and saw two tears well over and drop from her averted eyes, "Margaret! Margaret!" he said, "rather than that, it would have been better to have married even me."

She drew her hands from his, and covered her face; she was weeping.

"Is it too late?" he whispered. "Is there a possibility — I love you very deeply," he added. And, cold and indifferent as Florence considered him, his voice was broken.

When they came round to the ray again, he gave the blind beggar all the small change he had about him; the old man thought it was a paper golconda.

"You owe me another circuit," he said; "you did not speak through fully half of the last one."

So they went around a second time.

"Tell me when you first began to think about me," he said, as they passed the choir. "Was it when you read that letter?"

"It was an absurd letter."

"On the contrary, it was a very good one, and you know it. You have kept it?"

"No; I burned it long ago."

"Not so very long! However, never fear; I will write you plenty more, and even better ones. I will go away on purpose."

They crossed the east end, under the great dome, and came around on the other side.

"You said some bitter things to me in that old amphitheatre, Margaret; I shall always hate the place. But after all — for a person who was quite indifferent — were you not just a little *too* angry?"

"It is easy to say that now," she answered.

They went down the north aisle.

"Why did you stop, and leave the room so abruptly, when you were singing that song I asked for, you know, — the Semper Fidelis?"

"My voice failed."

"No; it was your courage. You knew then that you were no longer 'fidelis' to that former love of yours, and you were frightened by the discovery."

They reached the dark south end.

"And now, as to that former love," he said, pausing. "I will never ask you again; but here and now, Margaret, tell me what it was."

"It was not 'a fascination,' — like yours," she answered.

"Do not be impertinent, especially in a church. Mrs. Lovell was not my only fascination, I beg to assure you; remember, I am thirty-six years old. But now, — what was it?"

"A mistake."

"Good; but I want more."

"It was a will-o'-the-wisp that I thought was real."

"Better; but not enough."

"You ask too much, I think."

"I shall always ask it; I am horribly

selfish; I warn you beforehand that I expect everything, in the most relentless way."

"Well, then, — it was a fancy, Trafford, that I mistook for" — And the Duomo alone knows how the sentence was ended.

As they passed, for the third time, on their way towards the door, the mural tablet to Giotto, Morgan paused. "I have a sort of feeling that I owe it to the old fellow," he said. "I have always been his faithful disciple, and now he has rewarded me with a benediction. On the next high-festival, his tablet shall be wreathed with the reddest of roses and a thick bank of heliotrope, as an acknowledgment of my gratitude."

It was; and no one ever knew why. If it had been in "the season," the inquiring tourists would have been rendered distracted by the impossibility of finding out; but to the native Florentines attending mass at the cathedral, to whom the Latin inscription, "I am he through whom the lost Art of Painting was revived," remains a blank, it was only a tribute to some "departed friend."

"And he is as much my friend as though he had not departed something over five centuries ago," said Trafford; "of that I feel convinced."

"I wonder if he knows any better, now, how to paint an angel leaning from the sky," replied Margaret.

"Have you any idea why Miss Harrison invented that enormous fiction about you?" he said, as they drove homeward.

"Not the least. We must ask her."

They found her in her easy-chair, beginning a new stocking. "I thought you were in Tadmor," she said, as Trafford came in.

"I started; but came back to ask a question. Why did you tell me that this young lady was going to be married?"

"Well, is n't she?" said Miss Harrison, laughing. "Sit down, you two, and confess your folly. Margaret has been ill all summer with absolute pining, — yes, you have, child, and it is a woman's place to be humble. And you, Trafford, did not look especially jubilant, either, for a man who has been immensely amused during the same space of time. I did what I could for you by inventing a sort of neutral ground upon which you could meet and speak. It is very neutral for the other man, you know, when the girl is going to be married; he can speak to her then as well as not! I was afraid last night that you were not going to take advantage of my invention; but I see that it has succeeded (in some mysterious way out in all this rain) better than I knew. It was, I think," she concluded, as she commenced on a new needle, "a sort of experiment of mine, — a Florentine experiment."

Trafford burst into a tremendous laugh, in which, after a moment, Margaret joined.

"I don't know what you two are laughing at," said Miss Harrison, surveying them. "I should think you ought to be more sentimental, you know."

"To confess all the truth, Aunt Ruth," said Trafford, going across and sitting down beside her, "Margaret and I have tried one or two of those experiments, already!"

Constance Fenimore Woolson.