Atlantic monthly

Boston : Atlantic Monthly Co., -[c1932]

https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015030141918

necessarily a ward of the English government. His property was cared for and his education — a very careful one — seen to by the lieutenant governor of Bengal. This young Maharajah of Kuchberge became one of the best known characters in Calcutta, and was universally liked, both by the natives and the Europeans. It was thought wise for him to travel in Europe, but it was more than probable that if he undertook the journey unmarried he would return with a European wife, and this would injure his influence over his future subjects. The English government wished him to be married at once, and, on looking around for a wife suitable for their ward, they decided to make proposals for the hand of the daughter of Keshub Chunder Sen. It was a great temptation, a real Indian prince, and called by the English the best of them all. It was too great a temptation to be resisted, and a few months before the young lady had reached her sixteenth birthday she was married to the Maharajah, but with the condition that she was not to be taken to his home till his return from Europe. Even the Europeans considered the marriage unobjectionable, but the members of the Brahmo Somaj moved a court of inquiry into the conduct of their minister, and in spite of his assurance that he had received a direct revelation from heaven that this marriage was right and proper, a large number withdrew from the Brahmo Somaj, and organized a reformed Somaj of their own.

Keshub Chunder Sen answers to Dr. Johnson's definition of a remarkable man, for few could pass even the English philosopher's meagre allowance of time with him without feeling that he was possessed of extraordinary powers. One of the Lessing-like seekers after truth he seems to be, who would say with the author of Laocoön, "If God held all truth in his right hand, and in his left only the everlasting search after truth, I would bow humbly to his left hand, and say, Father, give; keep the truth for Thyself alone."

Charles Wood.

IN VENICE.

"Yes, we came over again in February, and have been here in Venice since the last of March. For some reasons, I was sorry to come back; one *is* so much more comfortable at home! What I have suffered in these wretchedly cold houses over here, words, Mr. Blake, can never express. For in England, you know, they consider fifty-eight Fahrenheit quite warm enough for their drawing-rooms, while here in Italy — well, one never *is* so cold, I think, as in a warm climate. Yes, we should have been more comfortable, as far as *that* goes, in my own house in New York, reading all those delightful books on Art, in a properly-warmed atmosphere (and I must say a properly-warmed spirit too), and looking at photographs of the pictures (you can have them as large as you like, you know), instead of freezing our feet over the originals, which half the time the eyes of a lynx could not see. But it is not always winter, of course. And then I have lived over here so long that I have, it seems, acquired foreign ways that are very unpopular at home. You may smile, and it *is* too ridiculous; but it is so. For instance, last summer we went to Carley Ledge (you know Carley; pretty little place), and we found out afterwards that the people came near mobbing us! Not exactly that, of course,

but they took the most violent dislike to us; and why? It is too comical. Because we had innocently treated Carley as we treat a pretty village over here. One lady said, and, I am told, with indignation, that we had been stopping, 'more than once, right in the main street, and standing there, in that *public* place, to look at a cloud passing over the mountain!' And another reported that she had herself discovered us 'sitting on the *grass*, no farther away from the main street than the open space in front of Deacon Seymour's, just as though it was out in the country!' That 'out in the country' is rather good, is n't it? Always that poor little main street!"

"Still, I think, on the whole, that the cold houses are worse than the village comments," replied Mrs. Marcy's visitor. "A New Yorker I know, a confirmed European too, always goes home to spend the three months of winter. When he comes back in the spring his English friends say, 'I hear you have had so many degrees of frost over there, — fancy!' — meaning, perhaps, zero, or under. To which he assents; but always inflexibly goes back. They look upon him as a kind of Esquimaux. But how does Miss Marcy like exile?"

"Oh, Claudia is very fond of Italy. You have not seen her, by the way, since she was a child, and she is now twenty; do you find her altered?"

"Greatly."

"At home she was never thought pretty, — when she was younger, I mean. She was thought too — too — vigorous is perhaps the best word; she had not that graceful slenderness one expects to see in a young girl. But over here, I notice, the opinion seems to be different," continued the lady, half questioningly. "And, of course, too, she has improved."

"My dear Miss Sophy — improved? Miss Marcy is a wonderfully beautiful woman."

"Yes, yes, I know; Mr. Lenox thinks so too, I believe," answered Mrs. Marcy, half pleased, half irritated. "It seems she is a Venetian, — that is of the sixteenth century, — and dressed in dark green velvet, with those great puffed Venetian sleeves coming down over her knuckles, a gold chain, and her hair closely braided, she would be, they tell me, a perfect Bonifazio. In fact, Mr. Lenox is painting her as one. Only he has to imagine the dress."

Mrs. Marcy was a widow, and fifty-five. It had pleased her to hear again the old "Miss Sophy" of their youth from Rodney Blake; but, as she had been one of those tall, slender, faintly-lined girls who are called lilies, and who are associated with pale blues and lavender, she naturally found it difficult to realize a beauty, even if it was that of a niece, so unlike her own. Mrs. Marcy was now less than slender; the blue eyes which had once mildly lighted her countenance were faded. But she still remained lily-like and willowy, and her attire adapted itself to that style; there was a gleam of the lavender still, she wore long shawls and scarfs.

In the easy-chair opposite, Rodney Blake leaned back. He was fifty-six, long and thin, with a permanent expression on his face of half-weary, half-amused cynicism, which, however, seemed to concern itself more with life in general than with people in particular, and thus prevented personal applications. He was well-to-do, well dressed. There was a generally received legend that he was rather brilliant. This was the more remarkable because he seldom said much. But perhaps that was the reason. Miss Marcy had entered as her aunt finished her sentence.

"The sitting is over, then," said the elder lady. "Has Mr. Lenox gone?"

"Not yet," answered the niece, giving her hand to Mr. Blake as he rose to greet her.

She was, as he had said, a beautiful

woman. Yet at home there were still those who would have dissented from this opinion, as, secretly, her aunt dissented. She was of about medium height, with the form of a Juno. She had a rich complexion, slowly moving eyes of deep brown, and very thick, curling, low-growing hair of a bright gold color, which showed a warmer reddish tinge in the light. She was the personification of healthy life and vigor, but not of the nervous or active sort; of the reflective. Wherever the sun touched her, it struck a color: whether the red of cheek or lip, or the beautiful tint of her forehead and throat, which was not fair but clear; whether the brown of her eyes, or the gold of eyebrows, eyelashes, and the heavy, low-coiled hair. Her features were fairly regular, but not of the pointed type; they were short rather than long, clearly, almost boldly, outlined. Her forehead was low; her mouth not small, the lips beautifully cut. She was attired in black velvet, — she affected rich materials, — and as she talked she twisted and untwisted a string of large pearls, which hung loosely round her throat and down upon the velvet of her dress.

"Mr. Lenox does not have to imagine much, after all," observed Mr. Blake in his slow way to Mrs. Marcy. "In velvet, with those pearls, she does very well as it is."

"They are only Roman beads," said Claudia. "I don't know what you mean, of course."

"I had been telling Mr. Blake that they say that if you had a green velvet, with those big sleeves, you know, and your hair braided close to the head, to make it look too small in comparison with the shoulders, it would be a Bonifazio," explained the aunt.

"Your pearls are not so effective as they might be, Miss Marcy," continued the visitor, again scanning her as she took a seat.

"I do not wear them in this way, but so." She unfastened the clasp, and rewound the long string in three close rows, one above the other, round her throat, above the high-coming black of her dress.

"That is better," said her critic.

"It feels like a piece of armor. So I unloosen it as soon as I can," she answered.

Here the artist came in, hat in hand. "I am on my way home," he said. "Good-morning, Mr. Blake. I have only stopped to ask about our expedition this afternoon, Mrs. Marcy."

"Oh, I suppose we shall go," answered that lady; "the day is so fine. How are they at home this morning, Mr. Lenox?"

"Elizabeth is quite well, thanks; Theocritus as usual. Shall I order gondolas, then?"

"If you will be so good; at four. Mr. Blake will, I hope, go with us."

And then Mr. Lenox bowed, and withdrew.

"Does the — the idyllic personage accompany us?" asked the gentleman in the easy-chair.

"It is only a child appended to the name," said Claudia, laughing. "For some reason, Mrs. Lenox always pronounces it in full; she could just as well call him Theo."

"It is her nephew, and she is devoted to him," explained Mrs. Marcy. "He is nearly ten years old, but does not look more than five. His health is extremely delicate, and he is, at times, rather — rather babyish."

"Peevish, is n't it?" said Claudia. She had taken up two long black needles entangled in a mass of crimson worsted, and, disengaging them, was beginning to knit another row on an unfinished stripe. Her beautifully moulded hands, full and white, with one antique gem on each, contrasted with the tint of the wool. The thin fingers of Mrs. Marcy were decked with fine diamonds, and diamonds alone; in spite of the "foreign

ways" of which that lady had accused herself, she remained sufficiently American for that. She could buy diamonds, and Claudia an antique ring or two; both aunt and niece enjoyed inherited incomes, that of Claudia being comfortable, that of Mrs. Marcy large.

These ladies occupied rooms on the third floor of a palace on the Grand Canal, not far below the Piazzetta. The palace was a stately example of Renaissance architecture, with three rows of majestic polished columns extending one above the other across its front. Between these columns the American tenant, who had once been called "the lily," and her niece, who was so like a Bonifazio, looked out upon the golden Venetian light — a light whose shadows are colors: mother-of-pearl, emerald, orange, amber, and all the changing gradations between them — thrown against and between the reds, browns, and fretted white marbles of the buildings rising from the water; that ever-moving water which mirrors it all, — here a sparkling, glancing surface, there a mysterious darkness, both of them contrasting with the serene blue of the sky above, which is barred towards the Riva by the long, lean, sharply-defined lateen spars of the moored barques, and made even more deep in its hue over the harbor by the broad sails of the fishing-sloops outlined against it, as they come slowly up the channel, rich, unlighted sheets of tawny yellow and red, with a great cross vaguely defined upon them.

Next to the Renaissance palace was a smaller one, narrow and high, of mediæval Gothic, ancient and weather-stained; it had lancet-windows, adorned above with trefoil, and a little carved balcony like old Venetian lace cut in marble. Here Mr. and Mrs. Lenox occupied the floor above that occupied by the ladies in the larger palace. Communication was direct, however, owing to a hallway, like a little covered bridge, that crossed the canal which flowed between, — a canal narrow, dark, and still, that worked away silently all day and all night at its life-long task of undermining the ponderous walls on each side; gaining perhaps a half inch in a century, together with the lighter achievement of eating out the painted wooden columns which, like lances set upright in the sand at a tent's door, the old Venetians were accustomed to plant in the tide round their water-washed entrances. At four o'clock the little company started, the three from the Gothic palace having come across the hall bridge to join the others. Two gondolas were in waiting; as the afternoon was warm, they had light awnings instead of the antique black tops, with the sombre drapery sweeping out behind.

"I like the black tops better," observed Claudia. "Any one can have an awning, but the black tops are Venetian."

"They can easily be changed," said Lenox.

"Oh, no; not in this heat," objected Mrs. Marcy. "We should stifle. Mr. Blake, shall you and I, as the selfish elders, take this one, and let the younger people go together in that?"

"I want to go in the one with the red awning, — the *bright* red," said Theocritus. This was the one Mrs. Marcy had selected.

"No, no, my boy; the other will do quite as well for you," said Lenox.

"It won't," replied the child, in a decided little voice.

"It is not of the slightest consequence," graciously interposed Mrs. Marcy, signaling to the other gondola, and, with Blake's assistance, taking her place within it.

Mr. Lenox glanced at his wife. She was occupied in folding a shawl closely over the boy's little overcoat. "Come, then," he said, giving his hand first to Miss Marcy, then to his wife and the child. The gondolas floated out on the broad stream.

Claudia talked; she talked well, and took the Venetian tone. "The only thing that jars upon me," she said, after a while, "is that these Venetians of to-day — those men and women we are passing on the Riva now, for instance — do not appreciate in the least their wonderful water-city, scarcely know what it is."

"They don't study 'Venice' because they are Venice, — is n't that it?" said Mrs. Lenox. She had soothed the little boy into placidity, and he sat beside her quietly, with one gloved hand in hers, a small muffled figure, with a pale face whose delicate skin was lined like that of an old man. His eyes were narrow, deep-set, and dark under his faintly-outlined fair eyebrows; his thin hair so light in hue and cut so closely to his head that it could scarcely be distinguished.

"I hope not," said Claudia, answering Mrs. Lenox's remark. "At least, I hope the old Venetians were not so; I like to think that they felt, down to their very finger-tips, all the richness and beauty about them."

"You may be sure the feeling was unconscious, compared with ours," replied Mrs. Lenox. "They did not consult authorities about the pictures; they were the pictures. They did not study history; they made it. They did not read romances; they lived them."

"I wish I could have lived then!" murmured Miss Marcy, her eyes resting thoughtfully on the red tower of San Giorgio, rising from the blue. No veil obscured the beautiful tints of her face; Claudia's complexion could brave the brightest light, the wind and the sun. The dark blue plume of the round hat she wore curled down over the rippled sunny braids of her hair. Mr. Lenox was looking at her. But Mr. Lenox was often looking at her.

"That would not be at all nice for us," said Mrs. Lenox, in her pleasant voice, answering the young lady's wish. "If you, Miss Marcy, can step back into the fifteenth century without trouble, we cannot; Stephen and I are very completely of this poor nineteenth."

"I don't know," said Claudia slowly; she looked at "Stephen" with meditative eyes. "He could have been one of the soldiers. You remember that Venetian portrait in the Uffizi at Florence, — General Gattamelata? Mr. Lenox does not look like it; but in armor he would look quite as well."

"I don't remember it," said Mrs. Lenox, turning to see why Theocritus was beating upon her knees with his right fist.

"You must remember, — it is so superb!" said Claudia.

"I want to sit on the other side," announced Theocritus.

"When we come back, dear. See, the church is quite near; we shall soon be there now," answered his aunt.

"You remember it, don't you?" said Claudia to Lenox.

"Perfectly."

"No, — *now*," piped Theocritus. "The wind is blowing down my back."

"If he is cold, Stephen" — said Mrs. Lenox.

"I will change places with him," replied her husband. "Do not move, Miss Marcy."

"No; aunt Lizzie must go too!" said the boy. He had wrinkled up his little face until he looked like an aged dwarf in a temper; he stretched back his lips over his little square white teeth, and glared at his uncle and Miss Marcy.

"Let me change, — do," said Claudia, rising as she spoke. And Mrs. Lenox accepted the offer.

"When you have finished my portrait, suppose you paint yourself as a fifteenth-century Venetian general," continued Miss Marcy, taking up again the thread of conversation which had been broken by Theocritus' obstinacy. "The portrait of a man painted by him-

self is always interesting; you can see then what he thinks he is."

"And is not?" said Lenox.

"Possibly. Still, what he might be. It is his ideal view of himself, and I believe in ideals. It is only our real, purified, — what we shall all attain, I hope, in another world."

Thus she talked on. And the man to whom she talked thought it a loveliness of nature that she passed so naturally and unnoticingly over the demeanor of the spoiled child who accompanied them. Mrs. Lenox could, for the present, take no further part in the conversation, as Theocritus had demanded that she should relate to him the legend of St. Mark, St. George, and St. Theodore, climbing down from their places over the church porch, the palace window, and the crocodile column, to fight the demons of the lagoons. This she did, but in so low a tone that the conversation of the others was not interrupted.

They reached the island, and landed; Mrs. Marcy and Blake were already there, sitting on the sun-warmed steps of the church whose smooth white façade and red campanile are so conspicuous from Venice. "We were discussing the shape of the prow of the gondola," said Mrs. Marcy, as they came up. "To me it looks like the neck of a swan." Mrs. Marcy never sought for new terms; if the old ones were only poetical — she was a stickler for that — she used them as they were, contentedly.

Mr. Blake, who always took the keynote of the conversation in which he found himself, advanced the equally veteran comparison of the neck of a violin.

"It is the shining blade of St. Theodore, the patron of the gondolas," suggested Claudia.

"To me, it looks a good deal like the hammer of a sewing-machine," observed Mrs. Lenox lightly. This was so true that they all had to laugh.

"But this will never do, Mrs. Lenox," said Blake, turning to look at her as she stood on the broad marble step, holding the little boy's hand; "you will destroy all our carefully prepared atmosphere, with your modern terms. Here we have all been reading up for this expedition, and we know just what Ruskin thinks; wait a bit, and you will hear us talk! And not one will be so rude as to recognize a single adjective."

"You admire him, then, — Ruskin?" said the lady.

"Admire? That is not the word; he is the divinest madman! Ah, but he makes us work! In some always inaccessible spot he discovers an inscrutably beautiful thing, and then he goes to work and writes about it fiercely, with all his nouns in capitals, and his adjectives after the nouns instead of before them, — which naturally awes us. But what produces an even deeper thrill is his rich way of spreading his possessive cases over two words instead of one, as, 'In the eager heart of him,' instead of 'In his eager heart.' This cows us completely."

"I want to go in the church. I don't want to stay out here any longer," announced Theocritus. And, as his aunt let him have his way, the others followed her, and they all went in together.

Compared with the warm sunshine without, the silent aisles seemed cool. After ten minutes or so Mrs. Marcy and Blake came out, and seated themselves on the step again. "You have known her for some time?" Blake was saying.

"Mrs. Lenox? No, only since we first met here, six — I mean seven — weeks ago. But Stephen Lenox I have always known, or rather known about; he is a distant connection of mine. His history has been rather unusual. His mother, a widow, managed to educate him, but that was all; they were really very poor, and Stephen was hard at

work before he was twenty. He had some sort of a clerkship in an iron-mill, and was kept at it, I was told, twelve and thirteen hours a day. Before he was twenty-two he married. He worked harder than ever then, although he had, I believe, in time a better place. His wife had no money, either, and she was not strong. Their two little children died. Well, after twelve years of this, most unexpectedly, by the will of an uncle by marriage, he came into quite a nice little fortune; the uncle said, I was told, that he admired a man who, in these days, had never had or asked for the least help from his relatives. And so Stephen could at last do as he pleased, and very soon afterward they came abroad. For he had been an artist at heart all this time, it seems; at least he has a great liking for painting, and even, I think, some skill."

"I doubt if he is a creative artist," answered Blake. "He is too well balanced for that, — a strong, quiet fellow. His wife is of about his age, I presume?"

"Yes; he is thirty-six, and she the same. They have been over here already nearly two years. She is a very nice little woman" (Mrs. Lenox was tall and slender; but Mrs. Marcy always patronized Mrs. Lenox), "although one *does* get extremely tired of that spoiled boy she drags about. Do you know," added the lady deeply, "I feel sure it would be much better for Elizabeth Lenox if she would remember her present circumstances more; there is no longer any necessity for an invariable untrimmed gray gown."

"Does n't she dress well?" said Blake. "I thought she always looked very neat."

"That is the very word, — neat. But there is no flow, no richness. She has been rather pretty once; that is, in that style, — gray eyes and dark hair; and she might be so still if she had the proper costumes. Of course, going about Venice in this way, one does not want to dress much; but she has not even got anything put away."

"If one does not wear it, what difference does that make?" asked the gentleman.

"All the difference in the world!" replied Mrs. Marcy. "Let me tell you that the very *step* of a woman who knows she has two or three nice dresses in the bottom of her trunk is different from that of a woman who knows she has n't."

"But perhaps Mrs. Lenox does not know she 'has n't,'" remarked Blake. This, however, went over Mrs. Marcy's head.

Within, the others were looking at the beautiful Tintorettos in the choir. After a while the ill-favored but gravely serene young monk who had admitted them approached and mentioned solemnly "the view from the campanile;" this not because he cared whether they went up or not, but simply as part of his duty.

"I should like to go," said Claudia; "I love to look off over the lagoons."

They turned to leave the choir. "*I* don't want to go," said Theocritus, holding back. "I want to stay here and see that picture some more; and I 'm going to!"

This time Miss Marcy did not yield her wish. "Do not come with me," she said to Mr. and Mrs. Lenox; "it is not in the least necessary. I have been up before, and know the way. I will not be gone fifteen minutes."

"I really think that he ought not to climb all those stairs," said Mrs. Lenox to her husband, looking at the child, who had gone back to his station before the picture.

"Of course not," answered Lenox. Then, after a moment, "I will stay with him," he added; "you go up with Miss Marcy."

"I want aunt Lizzie to stay, — not uncle Stephen!" called the boy, over-

hearing this, and turning round to scowl at them.

"He will not be good with any one but me," said Mrs. Lenox in a low tone. "You two go up; I will wait for you here."

"The question is, Is he ever good, even with her?" said Claudia, following Lenox up the long flight of steps, that winds in square turns up, up, to the top of the campanile.

"She says he is sometimes very sweet and docile, — even affectionate," replied Lenox. "She thinks he has quite a remarkable mind, and will distinguish himself some day, if we can only tide his poor, puny little body safely over its childish weakness, and give him a fair start."

"She is very fond of him."

"Yes; his mother was her dearest friend, his father her only brother."

Claudia considered that she had now given sufficient time to this subject (not an interesting one), and they talked of other things, but in short sentences, for they were still ascending. Twice she stopped to rest for a minute or two; then Lenox came down a step, and stood beside her. There was no danger; still, if a person should be seized with giddiness, the thought of the near open well in the centre, going darkly down, was a dizzy one.

At the top they had the view: wide green flatness towards the east, northeast, southeast, with myriad gleaming, silvery channels; the Lido and the soft line of the Adriatic beyond; towns shining whitely, in the north; to the west, Venice, with its long bridge stretching to the mainland; in port, at their feet, a large Italian man-of-war; on the south side, the point of the Giudecca.

> "A Saint-Blaise, à la Zuecca,
> Vous étiez bien aise;
> A Saint-Blaise, à la Zuecca,
> Nous étions bien là!"

quoted Claudia. "I chant it because I have just discovered that the Zuecca means the Giudecca yonder."

"What is the verse?" said Lenox.

"Don't you know it? It is Musset."

"I have read but little, Miss Marcy."

"You have not had *time* to read," said Claudia, with a shade of emphasis; "your time has been given to better things."

"Yes, to iron rails!"

"To energy and to duty," she answered. Then she turned the subject, and talked of the tints on the water.

Down below, in the still church, the little boy sat beside his aunt, her arm round him, his head leaning against her. The monk had withdrawn.

"The angels were all there, no doubt," she was saying; "but only a few painters have ever tried to represent them in the picture. It is not easy to paint an angel if you have never seen one."

"Pooh! I have seen them," said Theocritus, "hundreds of times. I have seen their wings. They come floating in when the sunshine comes through a crack, — all dusty, you know. How many of them there do you suppose saw the angels? Not that big girl with the plate, anyhow, *I* know!" Thus they talked on.

When the two from the campanile returned, and they went out to embark, a slight breeze had risen. The little boy lifted his shoulders uneasily, and seemed almost to shiver. Mrs. Lenox felt of his head and hands. "I think I had better take him back in one of those covered gondolas, Stephen," she said. "He seems to be cold; he might have a chill."

"Surely, it is very warm," said Mrs. Marcy.

"Yes, but he is so delicate," replied the other lady.

"I will go with you, Mrs. Lenox," said Claudia.

"Oh, no; the gondolas here are the small ones, I see, and Stephen could not

come with us. Do not leave him to go back alone; if one of us sees to the child, that is enough."

It ended, therefore, according to her arrangement: she went back with Theocritus in a covered gondola, Mrs. Marcy and Blake returned as they had come, while Claudia and Lenox had the third boat to themselves.

Rodney Blake being added, this little party continued its Venetian life. Lenox made some progress with his portrait of Claudia, but it was not thought, at least by the others, that his wife made any with Theocritus, that child remaining as delicate as ever, and, if possible, more troublesome. In Mrs. Marcy's mind there had sprung up, since Mr. Blake's arrival, an aftermath of interest in Venetian art and architecture which was richer even than the first crop; she went contentedly to see the pictures, churches, and palaces a fourth and even fifth time.

Claudia had a great liking for St. Mark's. "But who has not?" said Mrs. Marcy reproachfully, when Blake commented upon the younger lady's fancy.

"Yes; but it is not every liking that is strong enough to take its possessor there every day through eight long slow weeks," answered the gentleman.

"Not so slow," said Claudia. "But how do you know? You have been here through only one of them."

"That leanest mosaic in the central dome is an old friend of mine; he has told me many things in his time (I am an inveterate Venetian lounger, you know), bending down from his curved abode, his glassy eyes on mine, and a long thin finger pointed. Be careful; he has noticed you."

Several days later, strolling into the church, he found her there. "As usual," he said.

"Yes, as usual," she answered. Miss Marcy liked Blake; his slow remarks often amused her. And she liked to be amused; perhaps because she was not one of those young ladies who find everything amusing. She was sitting at the base of the last of the great pillars of the nave, where she could see the north transept with the star-lights of the chapel at the end, the old pulpit of colored marbles with its fretted top and angel, and the deep gold-lined dimness of the choir-dome, into which the first horizontal ray of sunset light was now stealing, — a light which would soon turn into miraculous splendor its whole expanse.

"It always seems to me like a cave set with gold and gems," said Blake, taking a seat beside her. "And, in reality, that is what it is, you know, — a wonderful robbers' cavern. As somebody has said, it is the church of pirates, — of the greatest sea-robbers the world has ever known; and they have adorned it with the magnificent mass of treasure they stole from the whole Eastern hemisphere."

"I wish they had stolen a little for me, — one of those Oriental chains, for instance. But what pleases me best here is the light. It is n't the bright, vast clearness of St. Peter's that makes one's small sins of no sort of consequence; it is n't the sombreness of the Duomo at Florence, where one soon feels such a dreadful repentance that the new virtue becomes acute depression. It is a darkness, I admit, but of such a warm, rich hue that one feels sumptuous just by sitting in it. I do believe that if some of our thin, anxious-faced American women could only be induced to come and sit here quietly several hours a day, they would soon grow serene and physically opulent, like" —

"Like yourself?"

"Like the women of Veronese. (Of course I shall have to admit that I do not need this process. Unfortunately, I love it.) But those Veronese pictures, Mr. Blake, — after all, what do they tell us? Blue sky and balconies, feasts

and brocades, pages and dogs, colors and splendor, and those great fair women, with no expression in their faces, — what does it all mean?"

"Simply beauty."

"Beauty without mind, then."

"A picture does not need mind. But, to be worth anything, beauty it must have."

"I don't know; a picture is a sort of companion. One of those pictures would not be that; you might as well have a beautiful idiot."

"Ah, but a *picture* is silent," replied Blake.

Claudia laughed. "You are incorrigible." Then, going back to her first subject, "I wish Mrs. Lenox would come here more," she said.

"You think she needs this enriching process you have suggested?"

"In one way, — yes. All this beauty here in Venice is so much to her husband; while she — is forever with that child!"

"But she does not keep him from the beauty."

"No; but she might make it so much more to him, if she would."

"Why don't you suggest it to her?"

"There is no use. She does not understand me, I think. We speak a different language."

"That may be. But I fancy she understands you."

"Perhaps she does," answered Claudia, with the untroubled frankness which was one of her noticeable traits. She spoke as though she thought indeed that Claudia Marcy's nature was a thing which Mrs. Lenox, or any one, might observe. Claudia rather admired her nature. It was not perfect, of course, but at least it was large in its boundaries, and above the usual feminine pettinesses; she felt a calm pride in that. She was silent for a while. The first sunset ray had now been joined by others, and together they had lighted up one half of the choir-dome; its gold was all awake, and glistening superbly, and the great mosaic figure enthroned there began to glow with a solemn, mysterious life.

"Men should not marry until they are at least thirty, I think," resumed Claudia; "and especially those of the imaginative or artistic temperament. Three quarters of the incongruous marriages one sees were made when the husband was very young. It is not the wife's fault; at the time of the marriage she is generally the superior, the generous one; the benefit is conferred by her. But — she does not advance, and he does."

"What would you propose in the way of — of an amelioration?" asked her listener.

"There can of course be no amelioration in actual cases. But there might be a prevention. I think that a law could be passed, — such as now exists, for instance, against the marriage of minors. If a man could not marry until he was thirty or older, he would at that time naturally select a wife who was ten years or so his junior, rather than one of his own age."

"And the women of thirty?"

"They would be already married to the men of fifty, you know."

Here a figure emerging from the heavy red-brown shadows of the north aisle, and seeming to bring some of them with it, as it advanced, crossed the billowy pavement, and stopped before them. It was Mr. Lenox. He took a seat on the other side of Blake, and they talked for a while of the way the chocolate-hued walls met the gold of the domes solidly, without shading, and of the total absence of white, — two of the marked features of the rich interior of the old pirate cathedral. At length Blake rose, giving up his place beside Miss Marcy to the younger man. "I think we have still a half hour before that jailer of a janitor jangles his keys," she said.

"Yes; but for the men of fifty it is time to be going," answered Blake. "They take cold rather easily, you know, those poor fellows of fifty."

He went away. Claudia and Lenox remained until the keys jangled.

Every day the weather and the water city grew more divinely fair. June began. And now even Mrs. Marcy saw no objection to their utilizing the moonlight, and no longer spoke of "wraps." The evenings were haunted by music; everybody seemed to be floating about, singing or touching guitars. The effect of the mingled light and shadows across the fronts of the palaces was enchanting; they could not say enough in its praise.

"Still, do you know, sometimes I would give it all for the fresh odor of the fields at home, in the country, and the old scent of lilacs," said Mrs. Lenox.

"Do you care for lilacs?" said Claudia. "If you had said roses" —

"No, I mean lilacs, the simple country lilacs. And I want to see some currant bushes, too; yes, and even an old wooden garden fence," replied Mrs. Lenox, laughing, but nevertheless as if she meant what she said. She went with them only that once in the evening, for when she reached home she found that the little boy had been wakeful, and that he had refused to go to sleep again because she was not there. After this the others went without her, in a gondola holding four. At last, although the moonlight lingers longer in Venice than anywhere else, there was, for that month at least, no more. Yet still the evening air was delicious, and the music did not cease; the effect of the shadows was even more marvelous than the mingled light and shade had been. They continued to go out and float about for an hour or two in the warm, peopled darkness. They went also, but by daylight, to Torcello, and this time Theocritus was of the party. During half of the day he was more despotic than he had ever been, but later he seemed very tired; he slept in his aunt's arms all the way home. Once she made an effort to transfer him to her husband, as the weight of his little muffled figure lay heavily on her slender arm; but Theocritus was awake immediately, and began to beat off his uncle's hands with all his might.

"Do let me take him, Elizabeth; he will soon fall asleep again," said Lenox. He looked annoyed. "You are overtaxing your strength; I can see that you are tired out."

"It will not harm me; I know when I am really too tired," answered his wife. She gave him a little trusting smile as she spoke, and his frown passed off.

They were all together in one of the large gondolas; Blake noted this little side-scene.

That night Theocritus had a slight attack of fever. Mrs. Lenox said that it came from over-fatigue, and that he must not go on any of the longer expeditions. When they went to Murano, therefore, and down to Chioggia, she did not accompany them, but remained at home with her charge.

Mrs. Marcy was enjoying this last month in Venice greatly. "Naturally, it is much pleasanter when one has some one to attend to one, and one too who knows one's tastes and looks after one's little comforts," she remarked to her niece, with some intricacy of impersonal pronouns. The lily did not observe that the attentions she found so agreeable were being offered to her niece also, by another impersonal pronoun. As she would herself have said, "naturally," when they went here and there together, the two elders often sat down to rest a while, when Claudia and Lenox did not feel the need of it.

"Of course, with her beauty, her attractive qualities, and her fortune, Miss Marcy has had many suitors," said

Blake to the aunt, during one of these rests.

"Several," answered that lady moderately. "But Claudia is not at all susceptible. Neither is she so — so generally attractive as you might suppose. She has too little thought for the opinions of others. She says, for instance, just what she thinks, and that, you know, is seldom agreeable."

"True; we much prefer that people should say what they don't. I have myself noticed some plainly evident faults in her: a most impolitic honesty; and, when stirred, an impulsiveness which is sure to be unremunerative in the long run. I should say, too, that she had an empyrean sort of pride."

"Yes," replied the lily, not knowing what he meant, but concluding on the whole that he spoke in reprobation. "As I said before, she has not *quite* enough of that true feminine softness one likes so much to see, — I mean, of course, in a woman."

"Her pride will be her bane, yet. It will make her blind to the most obvious pitfall. However, I'll back her courage against it when once she sees where she has dropped."

"What?" said the lily.

"She will in time learn from you; she could not follow a more lovely example," said Blake, coming back from his reflections.

Towards the last of June a long expedition was planned, an expedition into "Titian's country," which was to last three days. This little pilgrimage had been talked about for a long time, Mrs. Lenox being as much interested in it as the others. Whether she would have had the courage to take Theocritus, even in his best estate, is a question; but, after the time was finally set and all the arrangements made, his worst asserted itself, and so markedly that it was plain to all that she could not go. Something was said about postponement, but it was equally plain that if they were to go at all they should go at once, as the weather was rapidly approaching a too great heat. Claudia wished particularly to take this little journey; she had set her heart upon seeing the Titians and reputed Titians said to be still left in that unvisited neighborhood. Blake asserted that she even expected to discover one. It was next proposed (although rather faintly) that Mr. Lenox should be excused from the pilgrimage. But it could not be denied that the little boy had been quite as ill (and irritable) several times before in Venice, and that he had always recovered in a day or two. Not that Mrs. Lenox denied it; on the contrary, she was the one to mention it. She urged her husband's going; it was the excursion of all others to please him the most. It ended in his consenting; it seemed, indeed, too much to give up for so slight a cause.

"She looks a little anxious," observed Blake, as they waited for him in the gondola which was to take them to the railway station. Lenox had said good-by to her, and was now coming down the long stairway within, while she had stepped out on her balcony to see them start.

"Do you think so?" said Mrs. Marcy. "To me she always looks just the same, always so unmoved."

Lenox now came out, and the gondola started. Claudia looked back and waved her hand, Mrs. Lenox returning the salutation.

On the evening of the third day, at eleven o'clock, a gondola from the railway station stopped at the larger palace's lower door, and three persons ascended the dimly lighted stairs.

At the top Mrs. Lenox's servant was waiting for them. "Oh, where is signore? Is he not with you? He has not come? Oh, the poor signora, — may the sweet Madonna help her now!" cried the girl, with tears in her sympathetic Italian eyes. "The poor little boy is dead."

They rushed up the higher stairway and across the hall bridge. But it was as the woman had said. There, on his little white bed, lay the child: he would be troublesome no more on this earth; he was quiet at last. Mrs. Lenox stood in the lighted doorway of her room, as they came towards her. When she saw that her husband was not with them, when they began hurriedly to explain that he had not come, that he had stayed behind, that he had sent a note, she swayed over without a word, and fainted away.

It was only over-fatigue, she explained later. The child had lain in her arms for thirty hours, most of the time in great pain, and she had suffered with him. She soon recovered consciousness, and was quite calm, — more calm than they had feared she would be. They were anxiously watchful; they tended her with the most devoted care. Blake did what he could, and then waited. After a while, when Mrs. Lenox had in a measure recovered, he softly beckoned Mrs. Marcy out.

"You must tell her that her husband will not be back in time for — that he will not be back for at least six days, and very likely longer. And, as his route was quite uncertain, we cannot reach him; there is no telegraph, of course, and, even if I were to go after him, I could only follow his track from village to village, and probably come back to Venice behind him."

"How can I tell her!" said the tearful lady. "Perhaps Claudia" —

"No, on no account. You are the one, and you must do it," replied Blake, and with so much decision that she obeyed him. Thus the wife was told.

What Blake had said was true; it was hopeless to try to reach Lenox before the time when he would probably be back of his own accord. He had started on a hunt after some early drawings of Titian's, of which they had unearthed dim legends. One was said to be in an old monastery, among others of no importance; two more were vaguely reported as now here, now there. Lenox had not been certain of his own route, but expected to be guided from village to village according to indications. It was not even certain whether he would come back by Conegliano, or strike the railway at another point. "It certainly is an inexorable fate!" exclaimed poor Mrs. Marcy, in the emergency driven to unusual expressions.

But when Stephen Lenox's wife understood the position in which she was placed, she at once decided upon all that was to be done, and gave her directions clearly and calmly, — directions which Blake executed with an attention and thoughtful care as complete as any one could possibly have bestowed.

The little boy was to be buried at Venice, in the cemetery on the island opposite, early in the morning of the second day.

"She is *so* sensible!" Mrs. Marcy commented, admiringly. "Of course, under all the circumstances, it is the thing to do. But so many women would have insisted upon — all sorts of plans; and it would have been *so* hard."

"I would willingly carry out anything she wished for, no matter how difficult," replied Blake. "I greatly respect and admire Mrs. Lenox. But, as you say, the perfect balance of her character, her clear judgment and beautiful goodness, have at once decided upon the best course." (The lily had not quite said this; but, in her present state of distressed sympathy, she accepted it.)

Claudia, meanwhile, remained through all very silent. She assisted, and ably, in everything that was done, but said almost nothing.

The evening before the funeral the two ladies went across to Mrs. Lenox's rooms; they had left her some hours before, as she had promised to lie down for a while, but they thought that she was now probably awake again. They

found her sitting beside the little white-shrouded form.

"Now this is not wise, Elizabeth," began Mrs. Marcy, chidingly.

"I think it is; I like to look at him," replied the watcher. "See, the peaceful expression I have been hoping for has come; it is not often needed on the face of a child, but it was with my poor little boy. Look."

And, sure enough, there shone upon the small, still countenance a lovely sweetness which had never been there in life. The face did not even seem thin; its lines had all passed away; it looked very fair and young, and very peacefully at rest.

"His mother would know him now, at once; he was a very pretty little fellow the last time she saw him, when he was about a year old," she went on. "I was very fond of his mother, and his father, as probably you know, was my only brother. Their child was very dear to me," she resumed, after a short silence, which the others did not break. "His constant suffering made him unlike stronger, happier children, and I think that was the very reason I loved him the more. I wanted to make it up to him. But I could not. I suppose he never knew what it was to be entirely without pain, — the doctors have told me so. He did not know anything else, or any other way, but to suffer more or less, and to be tired all the time. And he was so used to it, poor little fellow, that I suppose he thought that every one suffered too, — that that was life. He has found a better now." Leaning forward, she took the small hands in hers. "All my loving care, dear child, was not enough to keep you here," she said, smoothing them tenderly. "But you are with your mother now; that is far better."

The funeral took place early the next morning. Then Mrs. Lenox came back to her empty rooms, and entered them alone. She preferred it so.

After the first explanation, the only allusion she had made to her husband's absence was to Rodney Blake. That gentleman had not expressed the shadow of a disapprobation. He had not told her that he had objected to Lenox's lengthened absence, and had done what he could to prevent it; he had stopped Mrs. Marcy sharply when she spoke of telling.

"Can't you see, Sophy, that that would be the worst of all for her?" he said; "to know that Lenox would go, in spite of my unconcealed opposition, just because Clau— just because he wanted those trivial drawings," he added, changing the termination of his sentence, but quite sure, meanwhile, that "Sophy" would never discover what he had begun to say.

Mrs. Lenox's remark was this. Blake had come in to speak to her about some necessary directions concerning the funeral, and, when she had given them, she said, "It will be a grief to Stephen, when he comes back, that he could not have seen the little boy, even if but for once more. And I hoped so that he would see him! I expected you back at eight, — you know that was the first arrangement, — and towards seven he seemed easier. Once he even smiled, and talked a little about that legend of St. Mark and St. Theodore, of which, you remember, he was so fond. Then it was half past seven, and I still hoped. And then it grew towards eight, and he was in pain again. Still, I kept listening for the sound of your gondola. But it did not come. And at half past eight he died. But perhaps it was as well so," she continued, although her voice trembled a little. "Stephen would have felt his suffering so much. I was more used to it, you know, than he was."

"Yes," answered Blake.

But she seemed to know that he was not quite in accord with her. "Of course, I feel it very deeply, Mr. Blake, on my own account, that my husband

is not here; I depend upon him for everything, and feel utterly lonely without him. But his absence is one of those accidents which we must all encounter sometimes, and as to everything else, — the outside help I needed, — you have done all that even he could have done. You have been very good to me," and she held out her hand.

Blake took it, and thanked her. And in his words this time he put something that contented her. It was the sacrifice he made to his liking for Stephen Lenox's wife.

The evening after the funeral Mrs. Marcy, who had been made nervous and ill by all that had happened, went out at sunset for a change of air, and Blake accompanied her. Claudia preferred to stay at home. But, five minutes after the departure of their gondola, she went up the stairs and across the hall bridge that led to Mrs. Lenox's apartment. Mrs. Lenox was there, lying on the sofa; it was the first time since the return that the two had been alone together. She looked pale and ill, and there were dark shadows under her eyes; but she smiled, and spoke in her usual voice, asking Claudia to sit beside her in an easy-chair that stood there. Claudia sat down, and they spoke on one or two unimportant subjects. But the girl soon paused in this.

"I have come to say," she began again, in a voice that showed the effort she made to keep it calm, "that I shall never forgive myself, Mrs. Lenox, for — for a great deal that I have thought about you, but especially for having had a part in the absence of your husband at such a time. If it had not been for me, he would not have gone off on that foolish expedition. But I wanted those miserable drawings, or at least sketches of them, and so I kept talking about it. When I think of what you have had to go through, alone, in consequence of it, I am overwhelmed." Here her voice nearly broke down.

"You must not take it all upon yourself, Miss Marcy," answered the wife. "No doubt Stephen wanted to please you; no doubt he wanted to very much, — to get you the drawings, if it was possible; of that I am quite sure."

But Claudia was not quieted. "If you knew how I have suffered, — how I suffer now, as I see you lying there so pale and ill" — here she stopped again. "I come to tell you how I feel your suffering, and I spend the time talking about my own," she added abruptly. "I am a worthless creature!" And, covering her face with her hands, she burst into tears.

Mrs. Lenox put out her hand and stroked the beautiful bowed head caressingly. "Do not feel so badly," she said. "You must not; it is not necessary."

"But it is, — it is," said the girl, amid her tears. "If you knew" —

"I do know, Claudia. I know *you*."

"Oh, if you really do," said Claudia, lifting her head, her wet eyes turned eagerly upon the wife, "then, it is better."

"It *is* better; it is well. My dear, — I think I have understood you all along."

"But — I have not understood myself," replied Claudia. She had nerved herself to say it; but after it was spoken a deep blush rose slowly over her whole face until it was in a flame. Through all its heat, however, she kept her eyes bravely upon those of the wife.

"That I knew, too," rejoined Mrs. Lenox. "But I also knew that there was no danger," she added.

"There was not. It was unconscious. In any case I should in time have recognized it. And destroyed it, as I do now." These short sentences were brought out, each with a fresh effort. "I do not speak of — of the other side," the girl went on, with abrupt, heavy awkwardness of phrase. "There never was any other side; it was all mine." And then came the flaming blush again.

"But you are very beautiful, Claudia?" said the other woman, not as if disturbed at all in her own quiet calm, but half tentatively.

"Yes, I am beautiful," replied Claudia, with a sort of scorn. "But he is not that kind of man," she added, a quick, involuntary pride coming into her eyes. Then she turned her head away, shading her face with her hand. She said no more; it seemed as if she had stopped herself shortly there.

After a moment or two Mrs. Lenox began to speak. "All this life, here in Venice, has been so much to Stephen," she said in her sweet, quiet voice. "You know he has worked very hard, — he was obliged to; just so many hours of each long day, for long, hard years. He never had any rest; and the work was always distasteful to him, too. It was a slavery. And it was beginning to tell upon him; he could not have kept it up without being worn out both in body and mind. Judge, then, how glad I am that he has had all this change and pleasure, — he needed it so! There is that side to his nature, — a love of the beautiful, and a strong one. This has been always repressed and bound down; it is natural that it should break forth here. I have not the feeling myself, — at least, not like his; but I understand it in him, and sympathize with it fully." She paused. Claudia did not speak.

"You have not been a wife, Claudia, and therefore there are some things you do not know," pursued the voice. "A wife becomes in time to her husband such a part of himself (that is, if he loves her) that she is n't a separate person to him any more, and he hardly thinks of her as one; she is himself. Many things become a matter of course to him, — are taken for granted, — on this very account. It does not occur to him that she may feel differently. He supposes that they feel alike. Often they do. Still, a woman's thoughts do not always run in the same channel as those of a man; we are more timid, more limited, more — afraid of things, you know; but the husband does not always remember that. But there are some things in which a husband and wife do feel alike, always and forever; there are ties which are eternal. And my own life holds them, — ties and memories so precious that I can hardly explain them to you; memories of those early years of ours when we were so alone and poor, but so dear to each other that we did not mind it. We love each other just the same; but then we had nothing but our love, — and it was enough. The coming, the short stay with us, and the fading away of our two little children, Claudia, — these are ties deep down in our hearts which nothing can ever sunder. Stephen will go back to all that old grief of his when he comes home to find the little boy gone. For the greatest sorrow of his life, one he has never at heart overcome, was that he felt when we lost our own little boy. Stephen had loved the child passionately, and would not believe that he must go; and, when he did, he bowed his head in a silence so long that I was frightened. I had never seen him give up before. But even that is a dear tie between us, for then he had only me. Those early years of ours, with their joys and sorrows, — I often think of them. A man does not dwell upon such memories, one by one, as a woman does. But they are none the less there, a part of his life and of him." She stopped. "Do not mind," she added, in a changed voice. "I am only — a little tired, I think."

Claudia, who had not moved, turned quickly. Mrs. Lenox's eyes were closed; she was very pale. But she did not faint; owing to Claudia's quick, efficient help, she was soon herself again. "You know what to do, don't you?" she said, smiling, when the faint feeling had passed.

"It is not that I know, so much as that I long to help you," answered Clau-

dia. "I wish you would let me unbraid your hair, and make you ready for bed; you look so tired, and perhaps I could do it with a lighter touch than Bianca," she added, humbly.

"Very well," said the other, assentingly.

And, with much care and skill, the girl performed her task. "I will even put out the light," she said. "I will tell Bianca that you have gone to bed, and are not to be disturbed." When all was done and the light out, she paused for a moment by the bedside. "I am not going to talk any more," she said, "but I will just say this: aunt and I are going away. To-morrow, probably, or the day after. You will not be left alone, for Mr. Blake will stay."

There was a silence. Then Mrs. Lenox's voice said, "That is a mistake. It would be better to stay."

"I do not see it in that way," answered the girl. Then, "You must not ask too much," she added, in a lower voice.

Mrs. Lenox took her hands, which were hanging before her tightly clasped. The touch shook Claudia; she sank down beside the bed, and hid her face.

"Stay; it is far better," whispered the wife. "Then it will be over. By going away you will only think about it the more."

"Yes, I know. But"—

"I will answer for all. I know you better than—you know yourself. When you see us together, it will be different to you. Stay, to please me."

"Very well," murmured the girl.

They kissed each other, and she rose. When she had reached the door, Mrs. Lenox spoke again. "Of course, you know that I quite understand that it is only a girl's fancy," she said, with a tender lightness. This was her offering to Claudia.

On the evening of the seventh day after the funeral, Stephen Lenox came back; he had sent a dispatch to his wife from Conegliano, and Blake was therefore able to meet him at Mestre, and tell him what had happened. He went directly home, and the others did not see him until the next evening. Then he came across to the larger palace. Blake was there; he kept himself rather constantly with Mrs. Marcy now, perhaps to direct that lady's somewhat wandering inspirations. For this occasion, he had warned her that she must not be too sympathetic, that she must be on her guard. So Mrs. Marcy was "on her guard:" she only took out her handkerchief four times; she even talked of the weather. Claudia scarcely spoke. Blake himself conducted the conversation, and filled all the gaps. They could naturally say a good deal about the health of Mrs. Lenox, as that lady had been obliged to keep her room for the three preceding days. Lenox did not stay long; he said he must go back to his wife. As he rose, he gave the small portfolio he had brought with him to Claudia. "I don't think they were Titians," he said. "But I sketched them for you as well as I could."

Mrs. Marcy thought this an opportunity; she took the portfolio, and exclaimed over each picture. Blake, too, put up his eyeglass to look at them. Lenox said a word or two about them, and waited a moment longer; then he went away. Claudia had not glanced at them.

He never knew of her visit to his wife; those are the secrets women keep for each other, unto and beyond the grave.

What passed when he came home was simple enough. His wife cried when she saw him; she had not cried before. She told him the history of the little boy's last hours, and of all he had said, and of the funeral. Then they had talked a while of her health, and then of future plans.

"I ought to have remembered that you were anxious about him even before

I went away," said Lenox, going back abruptly to the first subject. He was standing by the window, looking out; this was an hour after his return.

"But he had been ill so many times. No, it was something we could not foresee, and as such we must accept it. I wanted you to go, — don't you remember? I urged your going. You must not blame yourself about it."

"But I do," answered her husband.

"I cannot allow you to; I shall never allow it. To me, Stephen, all you do is right; I wish to hear nothing that could even seem otherwise. I trust you entirely, and always shall."

He turned. She was lying back in an easy-chair, supported by pillows. He came across, and sat down beside her, his head bent forward, his elbows resting on his knees, his face in his hands. He did not speak.

"Because I know that I can," added the wife.

That was all.

They stayed on together in Venice through another two weeks. Mrs. Lenox improved daily, and was soon able to go about with them. She seemed, indeed, to bloom into a new youth. "It is the reaction after the long, wearing care of that child," explained Mrs. Marcy. "And is n't it beautiful to see how devoted he is to her, and how careful of her in every way? But I have always noticed what a devoted husband he was, have n't you?"

These two ladies and Mr. Blake were going to Baden-Baden. But the others were going back to America. "We may return some time," said Lenox; "but at present I think we want a home."

"I wish we could have stayed on together always, just as we are now," sighed the sentimental lily, smoothing the embroidered edge of her handkerchief. "*Such* a pleasant party, and of just the right size; these last two weeks have been so perfect!"

The time for parting came. The three who were going to Baden-Baden were to leave at dawn, and they had come across to Mrs. Lenox's parlor to spend a last hour. Claudia talked more than usual, and talked well; she looked brilliant.

At the end of the second hour the good-bys began in earnest. Everything that was appropriate was said, Blake, in particular, delivering himself unblushingly of one long fluent commonplace after another. They were to meet again, — oh, very soon; they were to visit each other; they were to write frequently, — one would have supposed, indeed, that Blake intended to send a daily telegraphic dispatch. At last the lily, having kept them all standing for twenty minutes, bestowed upon Mrs. Lenox a final kiss, and really did start, the two gentlemen and Claudia accompanying her down the long hall. But the hall was dark, and Claudia was behind; without the knowledge of the others she slipped back.

Mrs. Lenox was standing where they had left her. When she saw the girl returning, pale, repressed, all the sparkle gone, she went to her, and put her arms round her; Claudia laid her head down upon the other's shoulder. Thus they stood for several moments, in silence. Then, still without speaking, Claudia went away.

When Mrs. Marcy reached the stairway which led down to her own apartment, on the other side of the hall bridge, "Why, where is Claudia?" she said.

"Here I am," said her niece, appearing from the darkness.

"You will come down with us for a moment, won't you, Mr. Lenox?" suggested the lily. "Just for one *last* look?"

"Do not ask him," said Claudia, smiling; "he is worn out! We have already extended that look over two long hours. Good-by, Mr. Lenox; and, this time, I think, it really is the last."

Constance Fenimore Woolson.