counterpart, and critically admired the likeness.

"It was an unwarranted liberty," she said to herself, "but he did it very well."

The delicate fiber of the wood had favored to the carver's purpose. The imitation hand bore a shade of flattery in the barely tinted birchen white, and in the fine grained satin smoothness that the keen blade had wrought, but this was not too much for more than a reasonable compliment. As to the modeling that was sincerely accurate, and the fingers rested on the key, precisely as Mary had seen them during many hours of many days. It is an excessively vain girl who admires herself as actually as she does a portrait, and the telegrapher really saw more beauty in the birchen hand than she had ever observed in the live one. As she contemplated it, Ravelli returned noiselessly behind her. "I a-wish to say some-thing, Mees Warriner."

The Italian accent of Ravelli grated with unnatural harshness on Mary's ears, and if he had been an intruder upon her privacy, instead of a man in a really public place, she would not have been surprised into a deep flush. She snatched her hand away from its wooden counterpart, and clasped it with its mate behind her, as she leaned her shoulder against the carving to hide it.

"If you have a message to send," she said, "I can't get it on the wire too soon. It's within five minutes of time to shut off."

She started to go behind the desk. He stopped her with a touch upon her shoulder, and she shrank away reprovingly, although it was solely the man's earnestness that had made him do it.

"No, no, it ees not words for-a ze wire zat I have-a for you," he said. "I wish-a to tell to yourself something. Will you leesten?"

"Yes if it is something that I ought to hear."

"Thees eez it. I am a-more than I seem here—deef-e-rent—so deef-e-rent you would hardly know-a me. In zis place I am on-ly a contractor for ze laborer. I am-a as common as my gang in-a clothes—in-a manner, too, eh? But een one hour—een one minute—I could-a con-veence you zat I am-a someting finer."

Mary did not show in her perfectly regained composure that she was so much as puzzled by the man's enigmatic talk. She said: "I don't see how it could be worth while, Mr. Ravelli."

"Oh, yes—I beg-a pardon for ze contra-dic-tion—yes, it ees worth-a while. Away from-a here, Mary, I would-a be so deef-e-rent zat you a-love me."

"Stop, Mr. Ravelli—stop."

The command was positive, but it was not obeyed.

"I love-a you —"

He caught her by one wrist as he began. She was utterly unresistant. If she had struggled, or cried out, he would have gone on with his voluble, excited declaration; but her placidity was incomprehensible to him.

"Mr. Ravelli," she began after a moment, "you understand English?"

"Perfectly, Mees Warriner."

"Well, here is plain English for you. I would use Italian if I could, so that you mightn't mistake me. You are to let go of my hand."

He did it.

"You are to go away instantly, and never come here again, except on business. Go at once."

That he did not do.

"For what-a did you come here, into one camp oof men, eef—"

"If I didn't expect to be unsafe? I'll tell you. It was a mistake. Operator No. 9 was ordered to this post. No. 9 had been a man who had within a week been discharged, and his number given to me. By an oversight no alteration was made in the record to show the sex of the new No. 9. I couldn't afford to lose the work. Besides——"

"Well, a-besides——"

"Besides, I reasoned that every man at Overlook would protect me against all the other men, —— if ——"

"Yes, eef——"

"Yes, if I cared absolutely nothing for any single one of them. Therefore, I am not afraid. But you must not annoy me."

Fury flashed into the man's eyes, into his reddened face, into the sudden tension of his gripped hands. The girl's contemptuous indifference maddened him. She saw this, and was at once alarmed, as she realized that here was a reckless lover—one who heated dangerously where another would have chilled under disdain; but she maintained an unshaken voice, as she said: "You may as well know, however, that I am amply protected. The night watchman is ordered to include this combined office and residence of mine in every round he makes. So I sleep quite unconcernedly. In the daytime, too, I shall have a defense, if it becomes necessary."

"O, have-a no alarm, Mees Warriner," and the man's facial expression softened singularly as he gazed wistfully at the girl, "I haf said I love-a you." Then, with a startling quick transition he giared menacingly off in the direction that Gerald Heath had gone. It seemed curious to Mary, too, that in his rage his English was clearer than usual, as he growled: "It is your lover that should be afraid of me." He flung out one fist in a fierce menace, and added in Italian: "Nel vindicarvi bisogna ch'egli mi rende la sua vita."

CHAPTER II.

THE NIGHT AND MARY WARRINER.

The full moon looked for Mary Warriner's little house that night, as soon as a clearance of the sky permitted, and then beamed down on her abode effulgently. But it was 11 o'clock before the gusty wind blew the thick clouds aside and let the orb illumine Overlook. Back of the shed in which the telegrapher worked by day was a structure in which she slept at night. It was built of slabs, with big growing trees to form its irregular corners, and their lowest limbs contributed the rafters, while stripped bark and evergreen boughs made the roof. The foliage swayed above in the fitful wind and covered the cabin and grass around it with commingling, separating, capering shadows of leaves as though a multitude of little black demons were trying to get to the slumberer within. Their antics looked spiteful and angry at first, but as the wind lessened to a breeze and as the moon seemed to mollify them, they became frolicsome without malice; and at length, when the merest zephyrs impelled their motions, they gamboled lazily, good-humoredly above and around the couch of Mary Mite.

It was midnight when a man shot into the open space around the cabin like a missile. He ran first to the front of the structure, where a tarpaulin curtained the shed for the night, and gazed for a moment blankly at this indication that the hour was not one of business. Tremendous haste was denoted in his every step and gesture. He plucked twice at the canvas, as though to pull it down. Then he skurried around to the single window of Mary's apartment, whose only door opened into the shed, and pounded with his knuckles on the ill-fitted sash, making it clatter loudly. Silence within followed this noise without.

"Hello! Wake up!" he cried. "Don't fool for a minute; wake up!"

There was no response, and he skipped to and fro in his impatience. He was an ordinary shoveler and pounder, with nothing to distinguish him from the mass of manual laborers at Overlook, but unlike the usual man with an errand at the telegraphic station, flourished a scrap of paper.

"I want to telegraph," he shouted, and struck the window again. "Get up quick! It's life and death!"

Mary Warriner was convinced that her services were urgently and properly required. She peeped warily out to inspect the man, estimated him to be merely a messenger, and then opened wide the sash which swung laterally on hinges. Her delicate face bore the same sort of calm that characterized it in business hours, but the moon shone on it now, the hair had got loose from the bondage of knot and pin, and for an outer garment she was carelessly enwrapped in a white, fleecy blanket. The man did not give her time to inquire what was wanted.

"You're the telegraph girl, ain't you?" he exclaimed. "Well, here's something to telegraph. It's in a hurry, hurry, hurry. Don't lose a minute."

"I couldn't send it to-night," Mary said.

"You must."

"It isn't possible. There is nobody at the other end of the line to receive it. The wire is private—belongs to the railroad company—isn't operated except in the day time. You'll have to wait until to-morrow."

"To-morrow I'll be 100 years old or else dead," the man almost wailed in despair.

"What?"

"I was only 10 years old yesterday. To-night I'm 60. To-morrow'll be too late. Here—here—send it to-night, Miss. Please send it to-night."

The mystified girl mechanically took the piece of paper which he thrust into her hands, but her eyes did not drop before they discovered the insanity in his face, and when they did rest on the paper they saw a scrawl of hieroglyphics. It was plain that this midnight visitor was a maniac. Against Overlook's civil and sane men Mary had entrenched herself confidently behind her apathy, but within the round of the clock she had been beset by agreeable sentiment, by violent passion, and now by irrational delusion. She screamed for help.

A watchman responded almost instantly to her call. He was a stalwart fellow, employed to guard the company's tools and machinery against mischief at night, and his patrol, since Mary inhabited the cabin, had brought him very frequently past the place. He chanced to have come almost there when he heard the outcry. Upon seeing the cause of the girl's fright, he dropped all perturbation of his own, and treated the incident as a matter of course. The lunatic wobbled like a drunken man, about to collapse, as he mumbled his request over and over again.

"Here, now, Eph," the watchman said, with as much cajolery as command, "you mustn't bother the young lady. Ain't you ashamed to scare her this way? Get right out of this."

The watchman took the other by the arm, and, as they started off—one insisting and one objecting—the official looked back to say: "He won't hurt nobody, Miss Warriner—he's just a little cranky, that's all."

Mary watched them out of sight, and while she was doing so Gerald Heath approached from the contrary direction. He had heard the girl's scream. Why he was within ear-shot he might not have been able to explain satisfactorily, for it was not his habit to take midnight walks, even when the air was so brightly moonlit and so temporarily fine; but if cross-questioned he would doubtless have maintained that he had sought only to escape from the darkness and closeness of his shanty quarters. Besides, where would he so likely wander, in quest of good sight and breath, as to the spot whence he could view the scenery which he in vain asked the railway company to exhibit to their passengers? As he turned the corner of the cabin, he saw Eph and the watchman departing, and comprehended the disturbance.

"Eph has been frightening you, Miss Warriner," he said.

Mary screamed again, but this time it was a low, musical little outcry of modesty. She had not observed Gerald's approach. She clutched the blanket closely around her white throat, which had been almost as much exposed as by an ordinary cut of frock, and drew under cover the gleaming wrists which had all day been bared to a greater extent by sleeves of handy working length. Then she reached out one taper arm, and swung the sash around on its hinges, so its inner cover of muslin made a screen between her and the visitor. He did not apologize for his intrusion, and she pouted a little, on her safe side of the sash, at his failure to do so.

"I see it was Eph that alarmed you," he said. "What did he do?"

She told him, and then asked: "Who is he, and what ails him?"

"He is a common laborer with an uncommon affliction," was the reply. "One day an excavation caved in, and for an hour he was buried. Some timbers made a little space around his head, but the rest of him was packed in earth. He had breathed the enclosed air two or three times over, and was almost suffocated. When we got him out he was insensible. He never came back to his senses. He believes he is living at the rate of more than a year every hour. That is why he was in such a hurry with his imaginary message."

"Poor fellow," came from the obverse side of the sash.

"Yes, poor fellow," the narrator assented. "I understood his hallucination at once. When a man is suddenly placed in mortal peril his past life dashes before him. Half drowned men afterward tell of reviewing in a minute the events of years. It is a curious mental phenomenon. Well, this poor chap had that familiar experience, but with a singular sequence. The impression that all his lifetime before the accident happened in a brief time has remained in his disordered mind. He believes that his whole earthly existence is condensed—that future years as well as his past ones are compressed into days, and his days into minutes. Nothing can disabuse him of this idea. Everything is to him ephemeral. That's why I nicknamed him Eph—short for Ephemeral, you see. He doesn't remember his real name, and on the roll he had only a number. He has done his work well enough, until within a few days, but now his malady seems to have turned to the worst. He has talked wildly of getting some physicians to check the speed of time with him, and it may have been that he wished to telegraph to this fancied expert."

"It is singular," Mary said, "and very sad."

The midnight incident seemed to have come to a conclusion. It was a proper time for Gerald to say good night and go away. He still stood on the opposite side of the half open sash, around the edge of which appeared a small set of finger tips which pulled the screen a little closer, showing that the girl was minded to shut herself in. But a hand twice as big opposed hers, gently yet strongly, and in doing so it touched her, upon which she let go and the window flew open.

"O, you mustn't see me," Mary exclaimed, as Gerald got a vanishing glimpse of the white draped figure. "Good night."

"You will be afraid if left alone," Gerald protested; "you can't go to sleep, nervous as you must be."

"I surely can't go to sleep talking," was her rejoinder, with the first touch of coquetry she had indulged in at Overlook.

"I won't talk then, I'll only keep guard out here until daylight. Eph may return."

"But there's the watchman. It is his duty."

"It would be my delight."

That silenced the invisible inmate of the cabin. The moon shone into the square opening, but Mary was ensconced somewhere in the darkness that bordered the income of light.

"Should I apologize?" Gerald at length began again. "It is like this, Miss Warriner. I used to know how to behave politely to a lady. But for six years I've lived in wildernesses—in railroad camps—from Canada to Mexico. We've had no ladies in these rough places—no women, except once in a while some mannish washerwoman or cook. That's what makes you so rare—so unexpected—that is why it would be a delight to be a patrolman outside your quarters—that is why I don't wish to go away."

"Oh—oh! I am interesting because I am the only specimen of my sex at Overlook. That isn't a doubtful compliment; it is no compliment at all. Good night."

"You misconstrue me altogether. I mean ——"

"I am sure you do not mean," and now the tone was pleadingly serious, "to remain here at my window after I request you to go away. I am, as you have said, the only girl at Overlook."

"If there were a thousand girls at Overlook ——"

"Not one of them, I trust, would prolong a dialogue with a young gentleman at night through the open window of her bedroom."

Half in respectful deference to Mary's unassailable statement of the rule of propriety applicable to the situation, and half in inconsiderate petulance at being dismissed, Gerald let go of the sash with an impulse that almost closed it. This time two miniature hands came out under the swinging frame. Would more than one hand have been naturally used? Was it not an awkward method of shutting a window? And Mary Warriner was not a clumsy creature. But there were the hands, and Gerald grasped them. They fluttered for freedom, like birds held captive in broad palms by completely caging fingers. Then he uncovered them, but for an instant kept them prisoners by encircling the wrists long enough to impetuously kiss them. Another second and they were gone, the window was closed, and the offender was alone.

He walked slowly away, accusing himself of folly and ungentlemanliness, and he felt better upon getting out of the clear, searching moonshine into the dim, obscuring shade of rocks and trees, among which the path wound crookedly. There rapid footsteps startled him, as though he were a skulking evil doer, and the swift approach of a man, along an intersecting pathway, made him feel like taking to cowardly flight. But he recognized the monomaniac, Eph, who was in a breathless tremor.

"Mr. Heath, could a man walk to Dimmersville before the telegraph station there opens in the morning?" Eph asked, with several catches of breath, and a reeling movement of physical weakness.

"You go to bed, Eph," was the reply, meant to be soothing, "and I'll see that your telegram goes from here the earliest thing in the morning. That won't be more than six or seven hours from now."

"Six or seven hours," the poor fellow deploringly moaned; "I'll be a good many years older by that time. Oh, it's awful to have your life go whizzing away like mine does," and he clutched at Gerald with his fidgety hands, with a vague idea of slowing himself by holding to a normal human being.

Then he darted away, swaying from side to side with faintness and disappeared in the foliage which lined the path he was following.

Gerald watched him out of sight, and was about to resume his own different way, when the voice of Tonio Ravelli was heard, with its Italian extra A to the short words, and a heavy emphasis on the final syllable of the long ones.

"Mistair Heath," he said, "I saw-a your affectionate par-ting weez Mees Warriner."

Gerald had just then the mind of a culprit, and he began to explain apologetically: "It was cowardly in me to insult a defenseless girl. She didn't invite it. I am ashamed of myself.

He hardly realized to whom he was speaking. The two men were now walking rapidly, Ravelli taking two strides to one of the bigger Gerald, in order to keep alongside.

"You-a should be ashamed—you-a scoundrel."

As much of jealous fury and venomous malice as could be vocalized in six words was in Ravelli's sudden outbreak. Gerald was astonished. He turned upon his companion, caught him by both lapels of the coat, and shook him so vigorously that his boot soles pounded the ground. Ravelli staggered back upon being loosed, and threw one arm around a tree to steady himself.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," said Gerald, "you shouldn't be reckless with your language. Perhaps you don't know what a scoundrel means in English."

"I saw you-a kiss her hand."

"Did you? Well, do you know what I'd do to you, Ravelli, if I saw you kiss her hands—as I did—without her consent? I'd wring your miserable neck. Now what are you going to do to me?"

"I am-a going to keel you!"

The blade of a knife flashed in Ravelli's right hand, as he made a furious onslaught; but the stronger and quicker man gripped both of his assailant's wrists, threw him violently to the ground, and tortured him with wrenches and doublings until he had to drop the weapon. In the encounter the clothes of both men were torn, and when Ravelli regained his feet blood was dripping from his hand. The blade had cut it.

"You meant to kill me," Gerald exclaimed.

"I said-a so," was the sullen, menacing response.

"And with my own knife," and Gerald, picking up the knife, recognized it.

"Your-a own knife—ze one zat you carve-a Mary's hand with so lovingly."

Ravelli had retained it since the previous afternoon, when he had picked it up from Mary Warriner's desk. It's blade was now red with blood, as Gerald shut and pocketed it.

"You cowardly murderer!"

"Murderer? Not-a yet. But I meant to be."

Ravelli turned off by the cross path, and Gerald passed on.

CHAPTER III.

A STROKE OF LIGHTNING.

The first man to go to work at Overlook in the morning was Jim Wilson, because he had to rouse the fire under a boiler early enough to provide steam for a score of rock drills. The nightwatchman awakened him at daybreak, according to custom, and then got into a bunk as the other got out of one.

"Everything all right?" Jim asked.

"I guess so," the other replied. "But I haint seen your boiler sence afore midnight. Eph was disturbin' Mary Mite, and so I hung 'round her cabin pretty much the last half of the night."

Jim went to his post at the boiler, and at an unaccustomed pace, from the point where he first saw and heard steam hissing upward from the safety valve. On quitting the night previous he had banked the fire as usual, and this morning he should have found it burning so slowly that an hour of raking, replenishing and open draughts would no more than start the machinery at 7 o'clock. Going nearer he found that open dampers and a fresh supply of coal had set the furnace raging.

What was that which protruded from the open door, and so nearly filled the aperture that the draught was not impaired?

A glance gave the answer. It was the legs and half the body of a man, whose head and shoulders were thoroughly charred, as Jim was horrified to see when he pulled the remains out upon the ground.

Jim ran to tell the superintendent, and within a few minutes a knot of excited men surrounded the body. The gathering grew in numbers rapidly. By means of the clothing, the dead and partially burned man was identified at once as Tonio Ravelli. That he had been murdered was an equally easy conclusion. The murderer had apparently sought to cremate the corpse. Whether he had found it physically impossible, or had been frightened away, could only be conjectured.

"Who can have done it!" was the question asked by Superintendent Brainerd, the autocrat of Overlook.

There was a minute of silence, with all staring intently at the body, as though half expecting it to somehow disclose the truth. The night watchman was first to speak.

"Eph might have done it," he said.

Then he told of the monomaniac's visit to the telegraphic station, and of the acute stage which his malady had reached. Nobody else present had seen him since the previous evening. Superintendent Brainerd ordered a search of the lodgings. Ten minutes were sufficient for a round of the different quarters. Eph was in none of them. The searchers returned to the furnace, and with them came Gerald Heath.

"I met Eph yonder where the path crosses, not a hundred yards from here, a little past midnight," Gerald said. "He was terribly excited. That was after he had tried in vain to telegraph a crazy message. Evidently his delusion, that his whole life was condensed into a brief space, had driven him to a frenzy. He spoke of walking to Dimmersville, but I tried to quiet him, and he disappeared."

Dimmersville was a town about ten miles distant, in a direction opposite to that from which the railroad had worked its way through the mountains. No wire connected it with Overlook, and there was no public road for the nearest third of the way, although a faint trail showed the course that a few persons had taken on foot or horseback.

"Very likely Eph has gone toward Dimmersville," Brainerd argued, "and we must try to catch him."

Before the order could be specifically given, a horse and a rider arose over the edge of the level ground, and came into the midst of the assemblage. The man in the saddle had a professional aspect, imparted chiefly by his smoothly shaven face. In this era of mustaches, a hairless visage is apt to be assigned to a clergyman, who shaves thus from a motive of propriety, an actor, who does it from necessity, or somebody who aims at facial destruction without the features suitable to that purpose. A countenance of which it can only be said that it has one nose, one mouth and two eyes, all placed in inexpressive nonentity, and which is dominated utterly by hair on and around it, may be less lost to individuality if entirely shaven. Of such seemed the visage of the dark man who calmly rode into the excitement at Overlook.

"Which way have you come?" Brainerd asked.

"From Dimmersville," was the reply.

"Did you see anybody on the way?"

"I started very early. Folks were not out of their beds in the houses—as long as there were any houses—and that is only for five or six miles you know. After that—yes—I did see one man. A curiously excited chap. He looked tired out. He asked the distance to Dimmersville, and whether the telegraph office would be open by the time he got there. Then he skurried on, before I had half answered him."

All that was known of the murder was told to the stranger by half a dozen glib tongues, and it was explained to him that he had encountered the maniacal fugitive.

"I knew there was something wrong about him," said the stranger. "It is my business to be observant."

He dismounted and hitched his horse to a tree. The dead body was shown to him. He examined it very thoroughly. All the particulars were related to him over and over. Then he drew Superintendent Brainerd aside.

"My name is Terrence O'Reagan," he said, and in his voice was faintly distinguishable the brogue of the land whence the O'Reagans came. "I am a Government detective. I have been sent to work up evidence in the case of some Italian counterfeiters. We had a clew pointing to a subcontractor here—the very man who lies there dead. Our information was that he used some of the bogus bills in paying off his gang. Now, it isn't going outside my mission to investigate his death—if you don't object."

"I would be glad to have you take hold of it," Brainerd replied. "We can't bring the authorities here before noon, at the earliest, and in the meantime you can perhaps clear it all up."

The eagerly curious men had crowded close to this brief dialogue, and had heard the latter part of it. O'Reagan became instantly an important personage, upon whose smallest word or movement they hung expectantly; and nobody showed a keener interest than Gerald Heath. The detective first examined the body. The pockets of Ravelli's clothes contained a wallet, with its money untouched, besides a gold watch.

"So robbery was not the object," said O'Reagan to Brainerd. "The motive is the first thing to look for in a case of murder."

Next, he found blood on the waistcoat, a great deal of it, but dried by the fire that had burned the shoulders and head; and in the baked cloth were three cuts, under which he exposed three stab wounds. Strokes of a knife had, it seemed, killed the victim before he was thrust partially into the furnace.

A storm was coming to Overlook unperceived, for the men were too much engrossed in what lay there on the ground, ghastly and horrible, to pay any attention to the clouding sky. Gloom was so fit for the scene, too, that nobody gave a thought to whence it came. To Gerald Heath the going out of sunlight, and the settling down of dusky shadows, seemed a mental experience of his own. He stood bewildered, transfixed, vaguely conscious of peril, and yet too numb to speak or stir. Detective O'Reagan, straightening up from over the body, looked piercingly at Gerald, and then glanced around at the rest.

"Is there anybody here who saw Tonio Ravelli last night?" he asked.

"I did," Gerald replied.

"Where and when?"

"At the same place where I met Eph, and immediately afterward."

"Ah! now we are locating Eph and Ravelli together. That looks like the lunatic being undoubtedly the stabber."

"And we must catch him," Brainerd interposed. "I'll send riders toward Dimmersville immediately."

"No great hurry about that," the detective remarked; "he is too crazy to have any clear motive, or any idea of escape. It will be easy enough to capture him." Then he turned to Gerald and questioned with the air of a cross-examiner: "Did the two men have any words together?"

"No," was the ready answer; "I don't know that they even saw each other at that time. Eph went away an instant before Ravelli came."

"Did you talk with Ravelli?"

"Yes."

"About what?"

"Not about Eph at all."

"About what, then?"

Now the reply came reluctantly: "A personal matter—something that had occurred between us—an incident at the telegraph station."

"The station where Eph had awakened the girl operator? Was it a quarrel about her?"

"That is no concern of yours. You are impertinent."

"Well, sir, the question is pertinent—as the lawyers say—and the answer concerns you, whether it does me or not. You and Ravelli quarreled about the girl?"

"The young lady shall not be dragged into this. She wasn't responsible for what happened between Ravelli and me."

"What did happen between you and Ravelli?"

The two men stood close to and facing each other. The eyes of the detective glared gloatingly at the upward angle into the pale but still firm face of the taller Gerald, and then dropped slowly, until they became fixed on a red stain on the sleeve of the other's coat. Did he possess the animal scent of a bloodhound?

"What is that?" he sharply asked. He seized the arm, and smelt of the spotted fabric. "It is blood! Let me see your knife."

Quite mechanically Gerald thrust one hand into his trousers pocket, and brought out the knife which he had taken back from Ravelli, whose blood was on it yet.

The storm was overhead. A first peal of thunder broke loudly. It came at the instant of the assemblage's intensest interest—at the instant when Gerald Heath was aghast with the revelation of his awful jeopardy—at the instant of his exposure as a murderer. It impressed them and him with a shock of something supernatural. The reverberation rumbled into silence, which was broken by O'Reagan:

"There'll be no need to catch Eph," he said, in a tone of professional glee. "This man is the murderer."

Again thunder rolled and rumbled angrily above Overlook, and the party stood aghast in the presence of the man dead and the man condemned.

"Bring him to the telegraph station," O'Reagan commanded.

Nobody disputed the detective's methods now—not even Gerald; and, a prisoner as completely as though manacled, although not touched by anyone, he went with the rest.

Mary Warriner had taken down the tarpaulin in front of her shed when the men approached. In the ordinary course of her early morning doings she would wait an hour to dispatch and receive the first telegrams of the day, and then go to breakfast alone at the table where the engineers and overseers would by that time have had their meal. She was astonished to see nearly the whole population of Overlook crowd around her quarters, while a few entered. But she went quickly behind the desk, and took her place on the stool. The soberness of the faces impressed her, but nothing indicated that Gerald was in custody, and her quick thought was that some disaster made it necessary to use the wire importantly.

"I wish to send a message," said O'Reagan, stepping forward.

The eyes of the girl rested on him inquiringly, and he palpably flinched, but as obviously nerved himself to proceed, and when he spoke again the Irish accent became more pronounced to hear, although not sufficiently to be shown in the printed words: "I will dictate it slowly, so that you can transmit it as I speak. Are you ready?"

Mary's fingers were on the key, and her bright, alert face was an answer to the query.

"To Henry Deckerman, President," the detective slowly said, waiting for the clicks of the instrument to put his language on the wire; "Tonio Ravelli, a sub-contractor here, was murdered last night."

Mary's hand slid away from the key after sending that, and the always faint tint in her cheeks faded out, and her eyes flickered up in a scared way to the stern faces in front of it. The shock of the news that a man had been slain, and that he was a man who, only the previous day, had proffered his love to her, was for a moment disabling. But the habit of her employment controlled her, and she awaited the further dictation.

"His body was found this morning in the furnace of the steam boiler," O'Reagan resumed deliberately, "where it had evidently been placed in a vain attempt to destroy it."

A shudder went through Mary, and she convulsively wrung her small hands together, as though to limber them from a cramp. But her fingers went back to the key.

"The murderer has been discovered," the detective slowly continued, and the operator kept along with his utterance, word by word. "He killed Ravelli for revenge. It was a love affair." Here the girl grew whiter still, and the clicks became very slow, but they did not cease. O'Reagan's voice was cold and ruthless: "The motive of the murderer was revenge. His name was Gerald Heath."

All but the name flashed off on the wire. Mary Warriner's power to stir the key stopped at that. She did not faint. She did not make any outcry. For a moment she looked as though the soul had gone out of her body, leaving a corpse sitting there. A grievous wail of wind came through the trees and a streak of lightning zig-zagged down the blue-clouded sky.

"Go on," said O'Reagan.

"I will not," was the determined response.

"Why not?"

"Because it is not so. Gerald Heath never murdered Ravelli."

Gerald had stood motionless and silent. Now he gave way to an impulse as remarkable as his previous composure had been singular. If there had been stagnation in his mind, it was now displaced by turbulence. He grasped Mary's hands in a fervid grip; then dropped them, and faced the others.

"I did not kill the Italian," he said. "He attacked me with my knife, which he had stolen. In the struggle his hand was cut, but I took the weapon away from him. He quitted me alive and unhurt. I never saw him again. You don't believe it? Mary does, and that is more than all else."

"The circumstances don't favor you," the detective retorted; "they convict you. You killed Ravelli because you and he were both in love with this young lady."

"Isn't it the rejected suitor who kills the other for spite?" This was in Mary Warriner's voice, weak but still steady. "Ravelli loved me, I know, and I drove him away. Mr. Heath loved me, I believed, and I had not repulsed him. If I were the cause of a murder between them, it should be Ravelli who killed Gerald."

"You detested Ravelli?" O'Reagan asked, with a strange bitterness.

"Yes."

"And you love Heath?"

The answer was no more hesitant than before: "Yes."

"Send the rest of my message," and the detective was boisterous. "Send the name. Gerald Heath is the murderer."

He roughly seized her hand and clapped it on the key. She drew it away, leaving his there. A blinding flash of lightning illumined the place, and what looked like a missile of fire flew down the wire to the instrument, where it exploded. O'Reagan fell insensible from the powerful electrical shock. The rest did not altogether escape, and for a minute all were dazed. The first thing that they fully comprehended was that O'Reagan was getting unsteadily to his feet. He was bewildered. Staggering and reeling, he began to talk.

Mary was the first to perceive the import of his utterance. He was merely going on with what he had been saying, but the manner, not the matter, was astounding.

He spoke with an Italian accent and made Italian gestures.

"You-a send ze mes-sage," he said; "Heath eez ze murder-are. Send-a zee mes-sage, I say."

Tonio Ravelli had unwittingly resumed his Italian style of English.

His plentitude of hair and whiskers was gone, and in the face thereby uncovered nobody could have recognized him in Detective O'Reagan, but for his lapse into the foreign accent; and he said so much before discovering his blunder that his identification as indeed Ravelli was complete.

Who, then, was the dead man? Why, he was Eph.

Nothing but the fear of being himself condemned as a murderer of the maniac, as a part of the scheme of revenge against Gerald, induced Ravelli to explain. He had found Eph lying dead in the path, after both had parted from Gerald. The plot to exchange clothes with the corpse, drag it to the furnace, burn away all possibility of recognition, and thus make it seem to be his murdered self, was carried out with all the hot haste of a jealous vengeance. Ravelli was not an Italian, although very familiar with the language of Italy, and able by a natural gift of mimicry to hide himself from pursuit for a previous crime. Overlook had been a refuge, until his passion for Mary Warriner led him to abandon his disguise. Thereupon, he had turned himself into Terrence O'Reagan, a detective, whose malicious work wrought happiness for Gerald Heath and Mary Warriner.

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WIGS FOR THE FAIR.

A Boston Girl Who Wears Several Colors—Begging a Curl.

There is a very pretty young married woman in society here, writes a Boston correspondent of the Albany *Argus*, who lost all her beautiful dark locks a year ago through the use of patent bleaching preparations. So now she has to wear a wig until they shall grow out again in their original blackness. But she makes the best of the misfortune, and, having a small number of artificial coiffures, varying in shade all the way from straw color to ebony hue, she is accustomed to ask the gentlemen of her acquaintance jocularly what hair she shall wear this day or that. As long as the opportunity last, she says, she means to make the best of it by varying her complexion at least three times a week. Her eccentricity reminds the writer of an old man he used to know, who always wore an ordinary brown wig on week days and a black wig for best on Sundays. Such a thing as wearing different sorts of bangs on various occasions is common enough among girls, the correspondent is led to believe. And this reminds him of a young woman he knows who affects a good deal of the lack of sentiment and excessively common-sense ways characteristic of the Boston girl. One evening not long ago, a young man whom she cordially disliked had been making her a visit, gushing over, as usual in his conversations, with idiotic compliments. At length, with an air and accent designed to be quite irresistible and heart-crushing, he said:

"My dear Miss P., your hair is so beautifull Should I be venturing too gross a liberty if I begged you to give me one little lock of it?"

"Not at all, Mr. K.," replied the lady, in a perfect matter-of-fact tone. "You are quite welcome."

And with that she deliberately detached a small curl from above her pink little ear on the left side, and gravely presented it, hairpin and all, to the importunate dude. Of course he took it. He could not perceive that there was anything else to do. But he has not been to call on that particular young woman since, and she indulges great hopes that he will never come back any more.

To Reduce a Swelled Head.

Atlanta Journal.]

He had been out all night—he told the tourist so—but this morning he looked as fresh as a daisy. "B——," the tourist said, "how is it that you haven't a 'head' this morning?" "I have, sir, beastly head." "You don't look like it." "Well, sir, I'll tell you why. I never look sleepy in the morning. I wet the end of my finger in cologne and rub my eyelids gently with it, being careful not to get any in my eye. In two minutes all the sleepy feeling is gone and I look as if I'd had a full night's rest. That's the whole secret, sir, the whole secret."

LIKE JAMES AND JOHN

Rev. Hodges Compares the Actions of Many Christians to the

APPEAL OF THE TWO APOSTLES.

Thoughtlessness is the Point Where We Are Most Lacking.

THE DREAD CALAMITY AT JOHNSTOWN

Upon a day in the week before the crucifixion, Christ and His Apostles are going up to Jerusalem. He has just been telling them the reason for their going. He has been trying to prepare their minds and to give them some idea of what they are going to. He has been trying to make them see the dark vision of the future, which he sees. "Behold," He says, "We go up to Jerusalem." And this is what will happen there: "The Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify Him." It is hard to see how the words could have been made plainer.

Immediately, however, after the utterance of these sad and foreboding sentences we read that a contention arose among these apostles as to which of them was the greatest, and as to which of them should have the best place in the kingdom of heaven. And when we read that we begin to get a dim conception of Christ's inexpressible loneliness. To be alone, in the physical meaning of the phrase, is not altogether unpleasant sometimes. There are those who when most alone are least alone. Out of their own thoughts they get sweet and satisfying companionship. But mental and spiritual loneliness is one of the hardest of all trials, the sense of being misunderstood, the impossibility of appreciation, the lack of sympathy, give bitterness to loneliness. This bitter loneliness Christ felt to the uttermost.

PRACTICALLY ALONE.

Behold Him here, the self-sacrificing, surrounded by the self-seeking! James and John are the worst of these self-seekers, or at least the most outspoken. Even they have not the face to go to Him who walks alone and sad before them, and interrupt Him, urging their request. They get their mother to go. With some dim understanding of the flagrant unworthiness and unseemliness of their request, they get behind her. They put her forward in their place. She comes and asks Him to grant her something. The words break in upon His musing as He walks, and He stops and asks her what it is. "What wilt thou?" "Grant that my two sons may sit one on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left in Thy kingdom!"

There was something worse here than the utter untimeliness of the request, worse even than the narrow, petty, office seeking temper which it showed; it revealed an utter misconception concerning the Lord's whole life. Here was the petty, ambitious, unspiritual Jewish notion of an earthly kingdom. Again and again, had He tried to teach them different from that. They would not be taught. They would insist, against His own repeated utterances, that somehow and somewhere the Lord was going to put on a splendid purple robe, and take a golden scepter in His hand, and put a jeweled crown upon His head, and gather about Him the armies of Judea, and drive out the Romans, and make Jerusalem His capitol, and be a greater King than David with a wider kingdom than that of Alexander or Augustus.

They insisted that there were to be actual thrones set up somewhere, made of gold studded with gems, and enriched with elaborate carvings—13 handsome thrones, Christ on the most magnificent one in the middle, and on the six at either side, these Gallilean peasants, no longer poor men, tax-gatherers, day laborers, fishing folk, no longer despised and insulted, but great, stately, rich, powerful, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. James and John are very anxious about getting the best seats of all. They will sit, one on the right hand and the other on the left of that great central throne.

QUITE A CONTRAST.

"I go," said Christ, "to be betrayed, mocked, spit upon, to be despised, to be rejected, to be crucified."

"O, Master," broke in the ambitious mother, "give James and John the best thrones in Thy kingdom!"

We can imagine with what sadness in His face, with what weariness and pain in His voice, the Master turns and answers, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptisms that I am baptized with?" "Are ye able to endure the tribulations and the trials which await me?"

There is not a moment's hesitation. James and John have their eyes upon those two great, golden thrones. They see a way of getting above their fellows and seizing the most profitable and honorable offices. The path is open to the best seats. They understand dimly that some condition or other lies between. The Lord has asked them if they are able to do something. What is there which they will not promise to do if they may but get this prize! And so they answer, "We are able." Oh, yes, able to do anything if you will only pledge us those best thrones. "We are able."

Now you hear in these words the voice of utter thoughtlessness. And I beg to remind you that James and John are very common names. I am afraid that their words are very common words. I am afraid that I have said them, and so have you, a good many times.

SIMILAR MEANINGS.

For here are words that mean nothing. They mean quite as much, however, as some of our own religious promises. We say our prayers at night, looking back over the day. There is the old sin again—the besetting sin of thought or word or deed. We ask God to forgive us and to help us. We promise to fight harder against that sin. And then the next night it is the same thing over again—the same confession, the same prayer, the same promise. We are thoughtless. We are thinking about something else. We are saying words with our lips of whose real meaning our hearts take but small notice.

We do not really intend to make a great self-sacrifice, to give up a cherished sin, to fight any real battle. It is only James and John over again.

I am afraid that there is still more of this distance between the lips and the will in the exercises of our public worship. How many of our services, are, for a good many of us, little more than guild meetings of the great confraternity of James and John? The spirit of these foolish brothers descends upon us. We miss our prayer and praise entirely. The service is as much a blank as the sermon is to the sleeper. The demon of thoughtlessness has stolen our opportunity. Some word in the prayer, some note in the voice of a singer, some sight or sound in the church takes our attention. We go on listening with our ears and pronouncing sentences of praise or petition with our lips, and we might as well be whirling a prayer-wheel, so far as the spirit of devotion is concerned in the matter. Will anybody deny this? Who will cast the first stone at James and John?

A FEW QUESTIONS.

I wonder how our services sound to the ear of God? I wonder how much of them get up to him? Is there a full harmony of responding voices, or is there only a dim murmur; here and there, perhaps, a voice sounding clear, and that only at times? Do the prayers and promises go up clear and entire before the throne of grace, or are they broken and discordant?

Sir Arthur Helps has suggested that it would be an immense advantage to use a peculiar kind of ink for printing history, such that after a certain time all the untrue and mistaken portion would fade out and become illegible. What curious reading some histories would be after that time had passed! How many adjectives would disappear, how many sentences vanish, how many pages, chapters, and even volumes, would become blank paper! And if the same ink could be employed by publishers of writings upon themes theological, what an inestimable, what an unspeakable gain! But suppose now that some spell were upon us at all prayer times, so that only the real and true words, the words which we really meant, should get utterance at all! Suppose that every syllable uttered after the James and