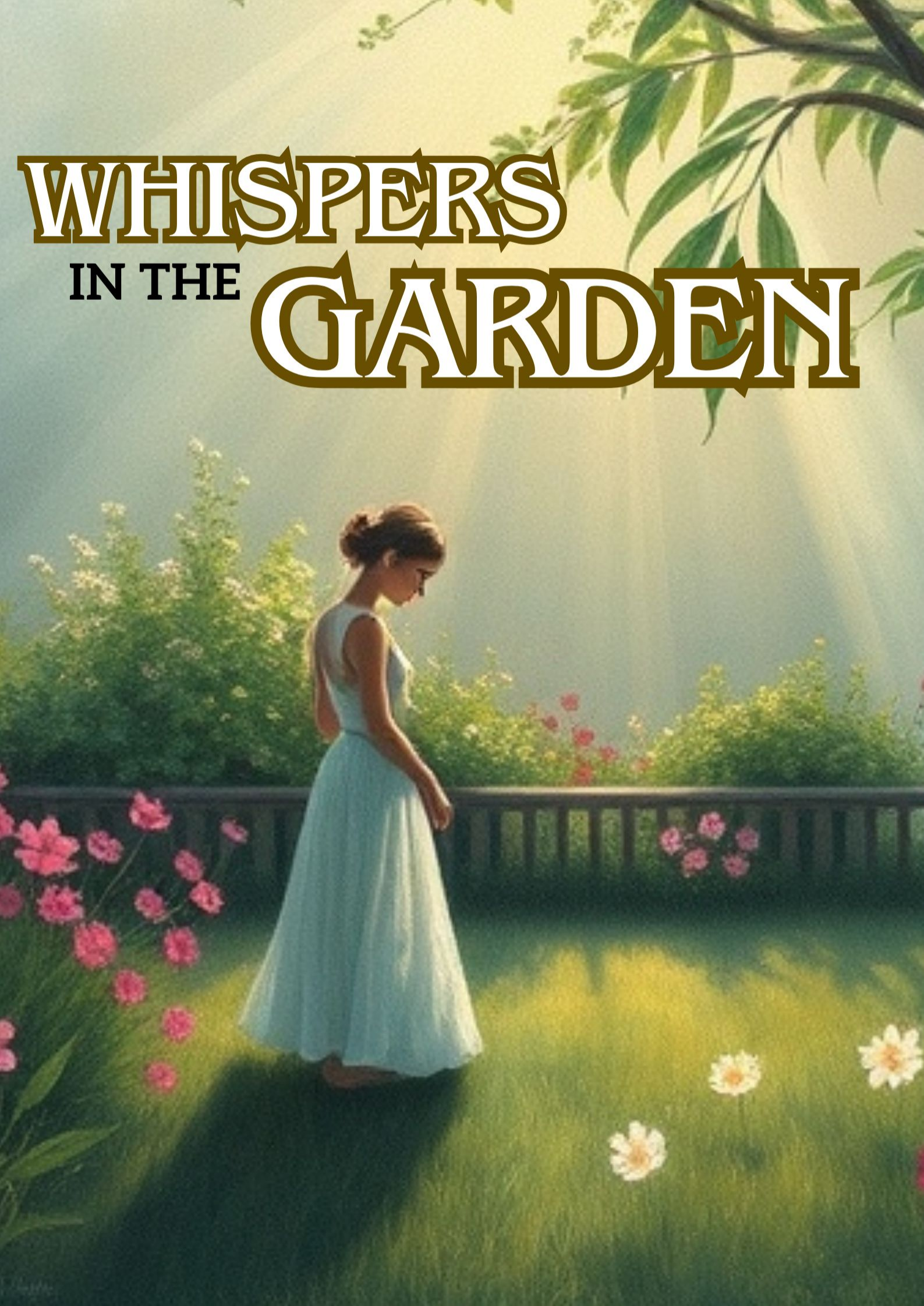
WHISPERS
IN THE
GARDEN

The daytimes were not ever very bad. Short-handed in the pretty garden, every one did a little work. The Lawyer was passionately fond of flowers, and the Youngster did most of the errands. The Sculptor had found some clay, and loved to surprise us at night with a new centre piece for the table, and the Divorcée spent most of her time tending Angéle's baby, while the Doctor and the Nurse were eternally fussing over new kinds of bandages and if ever we got together, it was usually for a little reading aloud at tea-time, or a little music. The spirit of discussion seemed to keep as far away before the lights were up as did the spirit of war, and nothing could be farther than that appeared. The next day we were unusually quiet. Most of us kept in our rooms in the afternoon. There were those stories to think over, and that we all took it so seriously proved how very much we had been needing some real thing to do. We got through dinner very comfortably. There was little news in the papers that day except enthusiastic accounts of the reception of the British troops by the French. It was lovely to see the two races that had met on so many battle fields—conquered, and been conquered by one another—embracing with enthusiasm. It was to the credit of all of us that we did not make the inevitable reflections, but only saw the humor and charm of the thing, and remembered the fears that had prevented the plans of tunnelling the channel, only to find them humorous. The coffee had been placed on the table. The Trained Nurse, as usual, sat behind the tray, and we each went and took our cup, found a comfortable seat in the circle under the trees, where a few yellow lanterns swung in the soft air. Then the Youngster pulled a white head-band with a huge "Number One" on it, out of his pocket, placed it on his head after the manner of the French Conscripts, struck an attitude in the middle of the circle, drew his chair deftly under him, and with the air of an experienced monologist began: Not so very many years ago there was a pretty wedding at Trinity Church in Boston. It was quite the sort of marriage Bostonians believe in. The man was a rising lawyer, rather a sceptic on all sorts of questions, as most of us chaps pride ourselves on being, when we come out of college. They were married in church to please the Woman. What odds did it make? Before they were married they had decided to live outside the city. She wanted a garden and an old house. He did not care where they lived so long as they lived together. Very proper of him, too. They spent the last year of their engaged life, the nicest year of some girls' lives, I have heard—in hunting the place. What they finally settled on was an old colonial house with a colonnaded front, and a round tower at each end, standing back from the road, and approached by a wide circular drive. It was large, substantial, with great possibilities, and plenty of ground. It had been unoccupied for many years, and the place had an evil report, and, at the time when they first saw it, appeared to deserve it. He had looked it over. The situation was healthy. It was convenient to the city. He could make it in his car in less than forty-five minutes. They saw what could be done with the place, and did not concern themselves with why other people had not cared to live there. Architects, interior decorators, and landscape gardeners were put to work on it, and, even before the wedding, the place was well on toward its habitable stage. Then they were married, and, quite correctly, went abroad to float in a gondola on the Grand Canal—together; to cross the Gemmi—together; to stroll about Pompeii and cross to Capri—together; and then ravage antiquity shops in Paris —together. They returned in the early days of a glorious September. The house was ready for its master and mistress to lay the touch of their personality on it, and put in place the trophies of their Wedding Journey. The evil look the house once had was gone. A few old trees had been cut down round it to let in the glorious autumn sun all over the house, and when, on their first morning, after a good sound, well-earned sleep, they took their coffee on the terrace off the breakfast room,

under a yellow awning, they certainly did not think, if they ever had, of the mysterious rumors against the house which had been whispered about when they first bought it. To them it seemed that they had never seen a gayer place. But on the second night, just as the Woman was putting her book aside, and had a hand stretched out to shut off the light, she stopped—a carriage was coming up the drive. She sat up, and listened for the bell. It did not ring. After a few moments—as there was absolutely no sound of the carriage passing—she got up, and gently pushed the shutter—her room was on the front—there was nothing there, so, attaching no importance to it, she went quietly to bed, put out her light, just noticing as she did so, that it was midnight, and went to sleep. In the morning, the incident made so little impression on her, that she forgot to even mention it. The next night, by some queer trick of memory, just as she went to bed, the thing came back to her, and she was surprised to find that she had no sleep in her. Instead of that she kept looking at the clock, and just before twelve, cold chills began to go down her back, when she heard the rapid approach of a carriage— this time she was conscious that her hearing was so keen that she knew there were two horses. She listened intently—no doubt about it—the carriage had stopped at the door. Then there was a silence. She was just convincing herself that there must be some sort of echo which made it appear that a team passing in the road had come up the drive—when she was suddenly sure that she heard a hurried step in the corridor—it passed the door. Now she was naturally a very unimaginative person, and had never had occasion to know fear. So, after a bit, she put out her light, saying to herself that a belated servant was busy with some neglected work—nothing more likely—and she went to sleep. Again the morning sunlight, the Man's gay companionship, the hundreds of delightful things to do, wiped out that bad quarter of an hour, and again it never occurred to her to mention it. The next night the remembrance came back so vividly after the Man had gone to his room, that she regretted she had not at least asked him if he had heard a carriage pass in the night. Of course she was sure that he had not. He was such a sound sleeper. Besides, it was not important. If he had, he would not have been nervous about it. Still, she could not sleep, and, just before the dining room clock began to chime midnight—she had never heard it before, and that she heard it now was a proof of how her whole body was listening—again came the rapid tread of running horses. This time every hair stood up on her head, and before she could control herself, she called out toward the open door: "Dearest, are you awake?" Almost before she had the words out he was standing smiling in the doorway. It was all right. "Did you think you heard a carriage come up the driveway?" she asked. "Why, yes," he replied, "but I didn't." "Listen! Is there some one coming along the corridor?" He crossed the room quietly, opened the door, and turned on the light. "No, dear. There is no one there." "Hadn't you better ring for your man, and have him see if any of the servants are up?" He sat down on the edge of the bed, and laughed heartily. "See here, dear girl," he said, "you and I are a pair of healthy people. We have happened to hear a noise which we can't explain. Be sure that there is rational explanation. You're not afraid?" "Well, no, I really am not," she declared, "but you cannot deny that it is strange. Did you hear it last night?" "Go on, now, with your cross-examination," he said. "Let's go to sleep. At any rate the exhibition is over for to-night." The fourth night they did not speak in the night any more than they had in the daytime. But the next day they had a long conversation, the gist of which was this: That they had bought the place, that except for fifteen minutes at midnight, the place was ideal. They were both level-headed, neither believed in anything super-natural. Were they to be driven out of such a place by so harmless a thing as an unexplained noise?

They could get used to it. After a bit it would no more wake them up,—such was the force of habit—than the ticking of the clock. To all this they both agreed, and the matter was dropped. For ten days they did not mention it, but in all those ten days a sort of crescendo of emotion was going on in her. At first she began to think of it as soon as bed- time approached; then she felt it intruding on her thoughts at the dinner table; then she was unable to sleep for an hour or two after the fifteen minutes had passed, and, finally, one night, she fled into his room to find him wide awake, just before dawn, and to confess that the shadow of midnight was stretched before and after until it was almost a black circle round the twenty-four hours. She knew it was absurd. She had no intention of being driven out of such a lovely place—BUT— "See here, dear," he said. "Let's break our rule. We neither of us want company, but let's, at least, have a big week ender, and perhaps we can prove to ourselves that our nerves are wrong. One thing is sure, if you are going to get pale over it, I'll burn the blooming house down before we'll live in it." "But you mind it yourself?" "Not a bit!" "But you are awake." "Of course I am, because I know that you are." "Do you mean to say that if I slept you wouldn't notice it?" "On my honor—I should not." "You are a comfort," she ejaculated. "I shall go right to sleep." And off she went, and did go to sleep. All the same, in the morning, he insisted on the house-party. "Let me see our list," he said. "Let us have no students of occult; no men who dabble in laboratory spiritualism; just nice, live, healthy people who never heard of such things—if possible. You can find them." "You see, dear," she explained, "it would not trouble me if I heard it and you did not—but—" "Oh, fudge!" he laughed. "Just now I should be sure to hear anything you did, I suppose." "You old darling," she replied, "then I don't care for it a bit." "All the same we'll have the house-party." So the following Saturday every room in the house was occupied. At midnight they were all gathered in the long drawing room opening on the colonnade, and, when the hour sounded, some one was singing. The host and hostess heard the running horses, as usual, and they were conscious that one or two people turned a listening ear, but evidently no one saw anything strange in it, and no comment was made. It was after one when they all went up to their rooms, so that evening passed off all right. But on Sunday night two of the younger guests had gone to sit on the front terrace, and the older people were walking, in the moonlight, in the garden at the back. The sweet little girl, who was having her hand held, got up properly when she heard the carriage coming, and went to the edge of the terrace to see who was arriving at midnight. She had a fit of nerves as the invisible vehicle and its running horses seemed about to ride over her. She ran in, trembling with fear, to tell the tale, and of course every one laughed at her, and the matter would have been dropped, if it had not happened that, just at that moment a very pale gentleman came stumbling out of the house with the statement that he wanted a conveyance "to take him back to town," that "he refused to sleep in a haunted house," that he "had encountered an invisible person running along the corridor to his room," in fact the footsteps had as he put it "passed right through him." The host broke into laughter, but he took the bull by the horns—the facts, as he knew them, were safer than the tales which he knew would run over the city if he attempted to deny things. "See here, my good people," he said, "there is a little mystery here that we can't explain. The truth is, there is a story about this house. It used to belong to the president of a well-known railroad. That was twenty-five years ago. They say that one night, when he was driving from a place he had up country, his team was run into at a railway crossing five miles from here—

one of those grade crossings that never ought to have been—and he was killed and his horses came home at midnight. 'They say' that the people who lived here after that declared that the horses have come home every midnight since. Now, there's the story. They don't do any harm. It only takes them a few minutes. They don't even trample the driveway, so why not?" "All the same, I want to go back to town," said the frightened guest. "I would stay the night, if I were you," said the host. "They won't come again until to-morrow." All the same, when morning came, every one skipped, and as the last of them drove away, the Woman put her hand through the Man's arm, and smiled as she said: "It's all over. I don't mind a bit. When I heard you saying last night, 'They don't even trample the driveway, so why not?' I said to myself, 'Why not?' indeed." "Good girl," he replied. "I'll bet my top hat you grow to be proud of them." I don't know that they ever did, but I do know that they still live there. I went to school with the son, and whenever any one bragged, he used to say, "Well, we've always had a ghost. You ain't got that!" The Youngster threw his lighted cigarette into the air, ran under it, caught it between his lips, and made a bow, as the Doctor broke into a roar of laughter. "I know that old house," he said. "Jamaica Pond. But see here, Youngster, your idea of ghosts is terribly illogical. It was the man who was killed, not the horses. The wrong part of the team walked." "You are particular," replied the Youngster. "The man did not come back, and the horses did. I can't split hairs when it's a ghost story. I feel afraid that I have missed my vocation, and that flights in the imagination are more in my line than flights in the air. I don't know what you think. I think it's a mighty good story. I say, Journalist, do you think I could sell that story? I've never earned a dollar in my life." "Well," laughed the Journalist, "a dollar is just about what you would get for it." "If I had been doing that story," said the Critic, "I should have found a logical explanation for it." "Of course you would," said the Youngster. "I know one of a haunted house on St. James Street which had an explanation." But the Doctor cut him short with: "Come now, you've done your stunt. No more stories to-night. Off to bed. You and I are going to take a run to Paris tomorrow." "What for?" "Tell you to-morrow." As every one began to move toward the house, the Violinist remarked, "I was thinking of running up to Paris myself to-morrow. Any one else want to go with me?" The Journalist said that he did, and the party broke up. As they strolled toward the house the Lawyer was heard asking the Youngster, "What were the steps in the corridor?" "Well," replied the Youngster, "I suppose on the night that the team came home there must have been great excitement in the house—every one running to and fro and—" But the Journalist's shout of laughter stopped him. The Youngster eyed him with shocked surprise. "By Jupiter!" cried the Journalist. "That is the darnedest ghost story I ever heard. Everything and everybody walked but the dead man—even the carriage." "That isn't my fault," said the Youngster, indignantly. The house was very quiet next day. All the men, except the Critic and the Sculptor, had made an early and hurried run to Paris. So we saw little of each other until we gathered for dinner, and the conversation was calm—in fact subdued. The Doctor was especially quiet. No one was really gay except the Youngster. He talked of what he had seen in Paris—the silent streets—the moods of the women—the sight of officers in khaki flying about in big touring cars—and no one asked what had really taken them to town. The Trained Nurse and I had walked to the nearest village, but we brought back little in the way of news. The only interesting thing we saw was Monsieur le Curé talking to a handsome young peasant woman in the square before the church. We heard her say, with a sob in her throat, "If my man does not come back, I'll never say my prayers again. I'll never pray to a God who let this,

thing happen unless my man comes back." "She will, just the same," said the Lawyer. "One of the strangest features of such a catastrophe is that it steadies a race, especially the race convinced that it has right on its side." "It goes deeper than that," said the Journalist. "It strikes millions with the same pain, and they bear together what they could not have faced separately." "True," remarked the Doctor, "and that is one reason why I have always mistrusted the effort of people outside the radius of disaster to help in anyway, except scientifically." "That is rather a cruel idea," commented the Trained Nurse. "Perhaps. But I believe organized charity even of that sort is usually ineffective, and weakens the race that accepts it. I believe victims of such disaster are healthier and come out stronger for facing it, dying, or surviving, as Fate decrees." "Keep off the grass," cried the Youngster. "I brought back a car full of books." The hint was taken, and we talked of books until the coffee came out. As usual, the Trained Nurse sat behind the pot, and when we were all served, she pushed the tray back, folded her strong capable white hands on the edge of the table, and said quietly: "Messieurs et Mesdames"— We lit our cigarettes, and she began: It was the first year after I left home and took up nursing. I had a room at that time in one of the Friendly Society refuges on the lower side of Beacon Hill. It was under the auspices of an Episcopal High Church in the days of Father Hall, and was rather English in tone. Indeed its matron was an Englishwoman— gentle, round-faced, lace-capped, and very sympathetic. I was very fond of her. I had, as a seamstress, a neat little girl named Josephine. Josephine was a tiny creature, all grey in tone, with mouse-colored hair. She was a foundling. She had not the least notion who her people were. Her first recollections were of the orphan asylum where she was brought up. In her early teens she had been bound out to a dressmaker, who had been kind to her, and, when her first employer died, Josephine, who had saved a little money, and longed for independence, began to go out as a seamstress among the women she had grown to know in the dressmaking establishment, and went to live at one of the Christian Association homes for working girls. Every one knows what those boarding houses are—two or three hundred girls of all ages, from sixteen up, of all temperaments. All girls willing to submit to control; girls with their gay days and their tragic, girls of ambition, and girls with faith in the future, as well as girls of no luck, and girls with their simple youthful romances. Every one loved Josephine. She was by nature a little lady, dainty in her ways, industrious, unrebellious, always ready to help the other girls about their clothes, and a model of a confidant. Every one told her their little troubles, every one confided their little romances. They were sure of a good listener, who never had any troubles or romances of her own to confide. I don't know how old Josephine was at that time. She might have been twentyfive, looked younger, but was perhaps older. She was so tiny, and such a mouse of a thing that she seemed a child, but for her energy, and her capacity for silence. It was, I fancy, three years after I first knew her that she one evening confided to a group of her intimate friends, as they sat together over their sewing, that she was engaged to be married. There was a great excitement. Little lonely Josephine, so discreet, who had sympathized with the romances of so many of her comrades, had a romance of her own. Such a hugging and kissing as went on, you never saw, unless you have seen a crowd of such girls together. Every one was full of questions, and there were almost as many tears shed as questions asked. He was a carpenter, Josephine told them. She had known him ever since she was with the dressmaker who took her out of the asylum. He lived in Utica, New York. He had a good job, and they were to be married as soon as she could get ready. So Josephine set to work with her nimble fingers to make her trousseau. During the years she had worked for me, the Matron at the Friendly Society, and many of its patrons had come to know and love dear little Josephine,

and in our house there was almost as much excitement over the news as there was at the Association at the South End. All the girls set to work to make something for little Josephine. Every one for whom she had worked gave her something. One lady gave her black silk for a frock. All the girls sewed a bit of underwear for her. She had sheets and table linen, and all sorts of dainty things which her girl friends loved to count over, and admire in the evening without the least bit of envy. By the time Spring came Josephine had to buy a new trunk to pack her things away in. Then she told us all that she was going to Utica to be married. What was the use of his spending his money to come east for her, and pay his expenses back? That seemed reasonable, and the day was fixed for her departure. Her trunks were packed. She took a night train so that we could all go to the station to see her off, and I am sure that the crowd who saw us kissing her good-bye are not likely to forget the scene. Then the girls went home chattering about "dear little Josephine." In due time came a letter from a place near Utica, where she was, she said, on her little "wedding trip," and "very happy," and "he" sent his love, and it was signed with her new name, and she would send us her address as soon as she was settled. Time went by—some months. Then she did send an address, but she did not write often, and when she did, she said little but that she was happy. As nearly as I can remember, it was a year and a half after she left that news came that Josephine had a son. By that time a great many of the girls she had known were gone. Changes come fast in such a place. But there was great rejoicing, and those who had known her found time to make something for dear little Josephine's baby, and the sending of the things kept up the interest in her for some months. Then the letters ceased again. I can't be sure how long it was after that that I received a letter from her. She told me that her husband was dead, that she never really had taken root in Utica, and now that she was alone, with her baby to support, she longed to come back to Boston, and asked my advice. Did I think she could take up her old work? I took the letter at once to the Matron of the Friendly Society—I happened to be resting between two cases—and we decided that it was safe. At least between us we could help her make the trial. A few months later she came, and we went to the station to meet her. I could not see that she had changed a bit. She did not look a day older, and the bouncing baby she carried in her arms was a darling. Of course she could not go back to the Association. That was not for married women. But we found her a room just across the street, and in no time, she dropped right back into the place she had left. Every morning she took the baby boy to the crêche and every night she took him home, and a better cared-for, better loved, more wisely bred youngster was never born, nor a happier one. Every one loved him just as every one loved Josephine. There I thought Josephine's story ended, and so far as she was concerned, it did. But when the baby was six years old, and forward for his age, the Matron of the Friendly Society came into my room one day, when I was there to take a longer rest than usual, after a very trying case, and told me that she was in great distress. A friend of hers, who had been her predecessor, and was now the Matron of an Orphan Asylum in New York State, was going to the hospital to have a cataract removed from her eye, and had written to ask her to come and take her place while she was away. She begged me to replace her at the Friendly Society while she was gone. As her assistant was a capable young woman, and my relations with every one were pleasant I was only too glad to consent. She had always been so good to me. She was gone a month. On her return I noticed that she was distressed about something.

I taxed her with it. She said it was nothing she felt like talking about. But one evening when Josephine had been sewing for me, after she was gone, the Matron, who had been in my room, got up, and closed the door after her. "I've really got to tell you what is on my mind," she said. "And I am sure that you will look on it as a confidence. You know the asylum where I have been is not far from Utica, where Josephine went when she was married. Well, one day, about a fortnight after I got there, I had occasion to look up the record of a child in the books, and my attention was attracted by a name the same as Josephine's. The coincidence struck me, and I read the record that on a certain day, which as near as I could calculate, must have been a year after Josephine left, a person of her name, written down as a widow, a member of the Orthodox Church, had adopted a male child a few months old. I was interested. I did not suspect anything, but I asked the assistant matron if she remembered the case. She did, clearly. She said the woman was a dear little thing, who had come there shortly before, a young widow, a seamstress. She was a lonely little thing, and some one connected with the asylum had given her work, which she had done so well that she soon had all she needed. She had been employed in the asylum, and loved children as they did her. The child in question was the son of a woman who had died at its birth, from the shock of an accident which had killed the father. It took a fancy to Josephine, and she wanted to adopt it. The committee took the matter up. The clergyman spoke well of her, as did every one, and they all decided that she was perfectly able to care for it. So she took the child. All of a sudden, one day, Josephine went, as she had come. There was no mystery about it. She told the clergyman that she was homesick for her old friends, and had gone east, and would write, and she always has. "Of course I was puzzled. There was no doubt in my mind that it was our little Josephine. Naturally I was discreet. Luckily. I spoke of her to several people who remembered her, and they all called her 'dear little Josephine' just as we had. I talked of her with the clergyman and his wife. I asked questions that were too natural to rouse suspicions, when I told them that I knew her, that the baby was the dearest and happiest child I knew, and what do you suppose I found out, more by inference than facts?" No need to ask me. Didn't I know? Josephine had never been married. There had never been any "He." It all seemed so natural. It did not shock me, as it had the Matron, and I was glad she had told no one but me. Dear little Josephine! Sitting there in the Association without family, with no friends but her patrons, and those girls whose little romances went on about her! No romances ever came her way. So she had made one all of her own. I proved to the Matron easily that what she had discovered by accident was not her affair, that to keep Josephine's secret was a virtue, and not a sin. I was sure of that, for, as I watched her afterwards, I knew that Josephine had played her part in her dream romance so well, that she no longer remembered that it was not true. She had forgotten she had not really borne the child she carried so lovingly in her arms. "Is that all?" asked the Journalist. "That is all," replied the Trained Nurse. "By Jove," said the Doctor, "that is a good story. I wish I had told it." "Thank you, Doctor," laughed the Trained Nurse. "I thought it was a bit in your line." "But fancy the cleverness of the little thing to do all the details up so nicely," said the Lawyer. "She dovetailed everything so neatly. But what I want to know is whether she planned the baby when she planned the make-believe husband?" "I fancy not," replied the Nurse. "One thing came along after another in her imagination, quite naturally." "Poor little Josephine—it seems to me hard luck to have had to imagine such an every day fate," sighed the Divorcée. "Don't pity her," snapped the Doctor.

"Poor little Josephine, indeed! Lucky little Josephine, who arranged her own romance, and risked no disillusion. There have been cases where the joys of the imagination have been more dangerous." "You are sure she had no disillusion?" asked the Critic. "I am," said the Nurse. "And her name was Josephine?" asked the Divorcée. "It was not, and Utica was not the town," replied the Nurse. "Perhaps her disillusion is ahead of her," said the Journalist. "'Say no man'—or woman either—'is happy until the day of his death.'" "She is dead," said the Nurse. "I told you she was lucky little Josephine," ejaculated the Doctor. "And she died without telling the boy the truth?" asked the Journalist. "The truth?" repeated the Nurse. "I've told you that she had forgotten it. No woman was ever so loved by a son. No mother ever so grieved for." "Then the son lives?" asked the Doctor. The Nurse smiled quietly. "Good-night," said the Doctor. "I am going to bed to dream of that. It is a pity some of the rest of us childless slackers had not done as well as Josephine. She took her risk. She was lucky." "She did," replied the Nurse, "but she did not realize anything of that. She was too simple, too unanalytic." "I wonder?" said the Critic. "You need not, I know." Her eyes fell on the Lawyer, and she caught a laugh in his eye. "What does that mean?" she asked. "Well," said the Lawyer, "I was only thinking. She was religious, that dear little Josephine?" "At least she always went to church." "I know the type," said the Violinist, gently. "Accepted what she was taught, believed it." "Exactly," said the Lawyer, "that is what I was getting at. Well then, when her son meets her au dela—he will ask for his father—" "Or," interrupted the Violinist, "his own mother will claim him." "Don't worry," laughed the Critic. "It's dollars to doughnuts that she was 'dear little Josephine' to all the Heavenly Host half an hour after she entered the 'gates of pearl.' Don't look shocked. That is not sacrilegious. It is intentions—motives, that are immortal, not facts. Besides—" "Don't push that idea too far," interrupted the Doctor from the door. "Don't be alarmed. I was only going to say—there are Ik Marvels au dela—" "I knew that idea was in your head. Drop it!" laughed the Doctor. "Anyway," said the Violinist, "if Life is but a dream, she had a pretty one. Good night." And he went up to bed, and we all soon followed him, and I imagine not one of us, as we looked out into the moonlit air, thought that night of war. The next day, just as we were sitting down to dinner, the news came that Namur had fallen. The German army had marched singing into the burning town the afternoon before. The Youngster had his head over a map almost all through dinner. The Belgians were practically pushed out of all but Antwerp, and the Germans were rapidly approaching the natural defences of France running from Lille to Verdun, through Valenciennes, Mauberge, Hirson and Mezières. Things were beginning to look serious, although we still insisted on believing that the Germans could not break through. One result of the march of events was that we none of us had any longer the smallest desire to argue. Theories were giving way to the facts of every day, but in our minds, I imagine, we were every one of us asking, "How long CAN we stay here? How long will it be wise, even if we are permitted?" But, as if by common consent, no one asked the question, and we were only too glad to sit out in the garden we had all learned to love, and to talk of anything which was not war, until the Critic moved his chair into the middle of the circle, and began his tale. "Let me see," he remarked. "I need a property or two," and he pulled an envelope out of his pocket and laid it on the table, and, leaning his elbows on it, began: It was in the Autumn of ' that I last saw Dillon act. She had made a great success that winter, yet, in the middle of the season, she had suddenly disappeared. There were all kinds of newspaper explanations. Then she was forgotten by the public that had enthusiastically applauded her, and which only sighed sadly, a year later, on hearing of her death, in a far off Italian town,—sighed, talked a little, and forgot again.

It chanced that a few years later I was in Italy, and being not many miles from the town where I heard that she was buried, and a trifle overstrung by a few months delicious, aimless life in that wonderful country, I was taken with a sentimental fancy to visit her grave. It was a sort of pilgrimage for me, for I had given to Dillon my first boyish devotion. I thought of her, and to remember her was to recall her rare charm, her beauty, her success, after a long struggle, and the unexpected, inexplicable manner in which she had abandoned it. It was to recall, too, the delightful evenings I had spent under her influence, the pleasure I had had in the passion of her "Juliet," the poetic charm of her "Viola"; the graceful witchery of her "Rosalind"; how I had smiled with her "Portia"; laughed with her "Beatrice"; wept with her "Camille"; in fact how I had yielded myself up to her magnetism with that ecstatic pleasure in which one gets the best joys of every passion, because one does not drain the dregs of any. I well remembered her last night, how she had disappeared, how she had gone to Europe, how she had died abroad,—all mere facts known in their bareness only to the public. It was hard to find the place where she was buried. But at last I succeeded. It was in a humble churchyard. The grave was noticeable because it was well kept, and utterly devoid of the tawdry ornamentation inseparable from such places in Italy. It was marked by a monument distinctly unique in a European country. It was a huge unpolished boulder, over which creeping green vines were growing. On its rough surface a cross was cut, and underneath were the words: "Yesterday This Day's Madness did prepare, To-morrow's Silence, Triumph or Despair." Below that I read with stupefaction, "Margaret Dillon and child," and the dates In spite of the doubts and fancies this put into my mind, I no sooner stood beside the spot where the earth had claimed her, than all my old interest in her returned. I lingered about the place, full of romantic fancies, decorating her tomb with flowers, as I had once decorated her triumphs, absorbed in a dreamy adoration of her memory, and singing her praise in verse. It was then that I learned the true story of her disappearance, guessed at that of her death, as I did at the identity of the young Dominican priest, who sometimes came to her grave, and who finally told me such of the facts as I know. I can best tell the story by picturing two nights in the life of Margaret Dillon, the two following her last appearance on the stage. The play had been "Much Ado." Never had she acted with finer humor, or greater gaiety. Yet all the evening she had felt a strange sadness. When it was all over, and friends had trooped round to the stage to praise her, and trooped away, laughing and happy, she felt a strange, sad, unused reluctance to see them go. Then she sat down to her dressing table, hurriedly removed her make-up, and allowed herself to be stripped of her stage finery. Her fine spirits seemed to strip off with her character. She shivered occasionally with nervousness, or superstition, and she was strangely silent. All day she had, for some inexplicable reason, been thinking of her girlhood, of what her life might have been if, at a critical moment, she had chosen a woman's ordinary lot instead of work,—or if, at a later day, she had yielded to, instead of resisted, a great temptation. All day, as on many days lately, she had wondered if she regretted it, or if, the days of her great triumph having passed,—as pass they must,—she should regret it later if she did not yet. It was probably because,—early in the season as it was—she was tired, and the October night oppressed her with the heat of Indian Summer. Silently she had allowed herself to be undressed, and redressed in great haste. But before she left the theatre she bade every one "good night" with more than her usual kindliness, not because she did not expect to see them all on Monday, —it was a Saturday night,—but because, in her inexplicably sad humour, she felt an irresistible desire to be at peace with the world, and a still deeper desire to feel herself beloved by those about her. Then she entered her carriage and drove hurriedly home to the tiny apartment,

where she lived quite alone. On the supper table lay a note. She shivered as she took it up. It was a handwriting she had been accustomed to see once a year only, in one simple word of greeting, always the same word, which every year in eighteen had come to her on New Year's wherever she was. But this was October. She sat perfectly still for some minutes, and then resolutely opened the letter, and read: "Madge:—I am so afraid that my voice coming to you, not only across so many years, but from another world, may shock you, that I am strongly tempted not to keep my word to you, yet, judging you by myself, I feel that perhaps this will be less painful than the thought that I had passed forgetful of you, or changed toward you. You were a mere girl when we mutually promised, that though it was Fate that our paths should not be the same, and honorable that we should keep apart, we would not pass out of life, whatever came, without a farewell word,—a second saying 'good-bye.'" "It is my fate to say it. It is now God's will. Before it was yours. It is eighteen years since you chose my honor to your happiness and mine. To-day you are a famous woman. That is the consolation I have found in your decision. I sometimes wonder if Fame will always make up to you for the rest. A woman's way is peculiar—and right, I suppose. I have never changed. My son has been a second consolation, and that, too, in spite of the fact that, had he never been born, your decision might have been so different. He is a young man now, strangely like what I was, when as a child, you first knew me, and he has always been my confidant. In those first days of my banishment from you I kept from crying my agony from the housetops by whispering it to him. His uncomprehending ears were my sole confessional. His mother cared little for his companionship, and her invalidism threw him continually into my care. I do not know when he began to understand, but from the hour he could speak he whispered your name in his prayers. But it was only lately that, of himself, he discovered your identity. The love I felt for you in my early days has grown with me. It has survived in my heart when all other passions, all prides, all ambitions, long ago died. I leave you, I hope, a good memory of me—a man who loved you more than he loved himself, who for eighteen years has loved you silently, yet never ceased to grieve for you. But I fear that I have bequeathed to my son, with the name and estate of his father, my hopeless love for you. If, by chance, what I fear be true,—if, when bereft of me, he seeks you out, as be sure he will,—deal gently with him for his father's sake. "There was an old compact between us, dear. I mention it now only in the hope that you may not have forgotten—indeed, in the certainty that you have not. I know you so well. Remember it, I beg of you, only to ignore it. It was made, you know, when one of us expected to watch the passing of the other. This is different. If this reminds you of it, it reminds you only to warn you that Time cancels all such compacts. It is my voice that assures you of it. "FELIX R." Underneath, written in letters, like, yet so unlike, were the words, "My father died this morning. F. R." and an uncertain mark as though he had begun to add "Jr." to the signature, and realized that there was no need. The letter fell from her hands. For a long time she sat silent. Dead! She had never felt that he could die while she lived. A knowledge that he was living,—loving her, adoring her hopelessly—was necessary to her life. She felt that she could not go on without it. For eighteen years she had compared all other men, all other emotions to him and his love, to find them all wanting. And he had died. She looked at the date of the letter. He would be resting in that tomb she remembered so well, before she could reach the place; that spot before which they had often talked of Death, which had no terrors for either of them. She rose. She pushed away her untouched supper,

hurriedly drank a glass of wine, and, crossing the hall to her bedroom, opened a tiny box that stood locked upon her dressing table. She took from it a picture—a miniature. It was of a young man not over twenty-five. The face was strong and full of virile suggestion, even in a picture. The eyes were brown, the lips under the short mustache were firm, and the thick, short, brown hair fell forward a bit over the left temple. It was a handsome manly face. The picture was dated eighteen years before. It hardly seemed possible that eighteen years earlier this woman could have been old enough to stir the passionate love of such a man. Her face was still young, her form still slender; her abundant hair shaded deep gray eyes where the spirit of youth still shone. But she belonged, by temperament and profession, to that race of women who guard their youth marvellously. There were no tears in her eyes as she sat long into the morning, and, with his pictured face before her, reflected until she had decided. He had kept his word to her. His "good bye" had been loyally said. She would keep hers in turn, and guard his first night's solitude in the tomb with her watchful prayers. She calculated well the time. If she travelled all day Sunday, she would be there sometime before midnight. If she travelled back at once, she could be in town again in season to play Monday; not in the best of conditions, to be sure, for so hard a rôle as "Juliet," but she would have fulfilled a duty that would never come to her again. It was near midnight, on Sunday. The light of the big round harvest moon fell through the warm air, which scarcely moved above the graves of the almost forgotten dead in the country churchyard. The low headstones cast long shadows over the long grass that merely trembled as the noiseless wind moved over it. A tall woman in a riding dress stood beside the rough sexton at the door of the only large tomb in the enclosure. He had grown into a bent old man since she last saw him, but he had recognized her, and had not hesitated to obey her. As he unlocked and pushed back the great door which moved easily and noiselessly, he placed his lantern on the steps, and telling her that, according to a family custom, there were lights inside, he turned away, and left her, to keep his watch near by. No need to tell her the family customs. She knew them but too well. For a few moments she remained seated on the step where she had rested to await the opening of the door, on the threshold of the tomb of the one man among all the men she had met who had stirred in her heart a great love. How she had loved him! How she had feared that her love would wear his out! How she had suffered when she decided that love was something more than selfgratification, that even though for her he should put aside the woman he had heedlessly married years before, there could never be any happiness in such a union for either of them. How many times in her own heart she had owned that the woman would not have had the courage shown by the girl, for the girl did not realize all she was putting aside. Yet the consciousness of his love, in which she never ceased to believe, had kept her brave and young. She rose and slowly entered the vault. The odor of flowers, the odor of death was about it. She lifted the lantern from the ground, and, with it raised above her head, approached the open coffin that rested on the catafalque in the centre of the tomb and mounted the two steps. She was conscious of no fear, of no dread at the idea of once more, after eighteen years, looking into the face of the man she had loved, who had carried a great love for her into another world. But as she looked, her eyes widened with fright. She bent lower over him. No cry burst from her lips, but the hand holding the lantern lowered slowly, and she tumbled down the two steps, and staggered back against the wall, where, behind lettered slides, the dead Richmonds for six generations slept their long sleep together. Her breast heaved up and down, as if life, like a caged thing, were striving to escape. Yet no sound came from her colorless lips,

no tears were in her widened eyes. The realizing sense of departed years had reached her heart at last, and the shock was terrible. With a violent effort she recovered herself. But the firm step, the fearless, hopeful face with which she had approached the coffin of her dead lover were very different from the blind manner in which she stumbled back to his bier, and the hand which a second time raised the lantern trembled so that its wavering light shed an added weirdness on the still face, so strange to her eyes, and stranger still to her heart. He had been a young man when they parted. To her he had remained young. Now the hair about the brows was thin and white, the drooping mustache that entirely concealed the mouth was grizzled; lines furrowed the forehead, outlined the sunken eyes, and gave an added thinness to the nostrils. She bent once more over the face, to her only a strange cold mask. A painful fascination held her for several minutes, forcing her to mark how love, that had kept her young, proud, content in its very existence, had sapped his life, and doubled his years. The realization bent her slender figure under a load of self-reproach and selfmistrust. She drooped lower and lower above the sad, dead face until she slid to the ground beside him. Heavy tearless sobs shook her slight frame as it stretched its length beside the dead love and the dead dream. The ideal so long treasured in her soul had lost its reality. The present had wiped out the past as a sponge wipes off a slate. If she had but heeded his warning, and refrained from coming until later, she would have escaped making a stranger of him forever. Now the sad, aged face, the dead, strange face which she had seen but five minutes before, had completely obscured in her memory the long-loved, young face that had been with her all these years. The spirit whose consoling presence she had thought to feel upholding her at this moment made no sign. She was alone in the world, bereft of her one supporting ideal, alone beside the dead body of one who was a stranger alike to her sight and her emotions; alone at night in an isolation as unexpected as it was terrible to her, and which chilled her senses as if it had come to oppress her forever. The shadows which she had not noticed before, the dark corners of the tomb, the motionless gleam of the moon as it fell through the open door, and laid silently on the floor like light stretched dead, the low rustle of the wind as if Nature restlessly moved in her sleep, came suddenly upon her, and brought her—fear. She held her breath as she stilled her sobs to realize that she alone lived in this city of the Dead. The chill of fright crept along the surface of her body, which still vibrated with her storm of grief. She seemed paralyzed. She dared not move. Every sense rallied to her ears in dread. Suddenly she heard her name breathed: "Margaret!" It was whispered in a voice once so familiar to her ears, a voice that used to say, "Madge." She raised herself on her elbow. She dared not answer. She hardly dared breathe. She was afraid in every sense, and yet she hungered for another sound of that loved voice. Every hour of its banishment was regretted at that moment. There seemed no future without it. Every nerve listened. At first she heard nothing but the restless moving of the air, which merely emphasized her loneliness, then she caught the pulsation of slow regular breathing. She started to her feet. She snatched up the lantern and quickly mounted to the bier. She looked sharply down into the dead face. Silent, with its white hair, and worn lines, it rested on its white pillows. No sound came from the cold still lips. Yet, while her eyes were riveted on them, once more the longed-for voice breathed her name. "Margaret!" It came from behind her. She turned quickly. There in the moonlit doorway, with a sad, compassionate smile on his strong, young face—as if it were yesterday they had parted—stood the man she remembered so well. Her bewildered eyes turned from the silent, unfamiliar face among the satin cushions, to the living face in the moonlight,—the young, brown eyes, the short, brown hair falling forward over the left temple, the erect, elastic figure, the strong loving hands stretching out to her. She was so tired,

so heart sick, so full of longing for the love she had lost. "Felix," she sobbed, and, blindly groping to reach what she feared was a hallucination, she stumbled down the steps, and was caught up in the arms flung wide to catch her, and which folded about her as if forever. She sighed his name again, upon the passionate young lips which had inherited the great love she had put aside so long before. As the last words died away, the Critic drew himself up and laughed. He had told the story very dramatically, reading the letter from the envelope he had called a "property," and he had told it well. The laugh broke the spell, and the Doctor echoed it heartily. "All right, old man," said the Critic, "you owed me that laugh. You're welcome." "I was only thinking," said the Doctor, his face still on a broad grin, "that we have always thought you ought to have been a novelist, and now we know at last just what kind of a novelist you would have been." "Don't you believe it," said the Critic, "That was only improvisatore—that's no sample." "Ho, ho! I'll bet you anything that the manuscript is up in your trunk, and that you have been committing it to memory ever since this idea was proposed," said the Doctor, still laughing. "No, that I deny," replied the Critic, "but as I am no poseur, I will own that I wrote it years ago, and rewrote it so often that I never could forget it. I'll confess more than that, the story has been 'declined with thanks' by every decent magazine in the States and in England. Now perhaps some one will tell me why." "I don't know the answer," said the Youngster, seriously, "unless it is 'why not?'" "I shouldn't wonder if it were sentimental twaddle," sighed the Journalist, "but I don't know." "I noticed," expostulated the Critic, "that you all listened, enthralled." "Oh," replied the Doctor, "that was a tribute to your personal charm. You did it very well." "Exactly," said the Critic, "if editors would let me read them my stories, I could sell them like hot cakes. I never believed that Homer would have lived as long as he has, if he had not made the reputation of his tales by singing them centuries before any one tried to read them. Now no one dares to say they bore him. The reading public, and the editors who cater to it, are just like some stupid theatrical managers I know of, who will never let an author read a play to them for fear that he may give the play some charm that the fool theatrical man might not have felt from mere type-written words on white or yellow paper. By Jove, I know the case of a manager who once bought the option on a foreign play from a scenario provided by a clever friend of mine—and paid a stiff price for it, too, and when he got the manuscript wrote to the chap who did the scenario—'Play dashetydashed rot. If it had been as good as your scenario, it would have gone.' And, what is more, he sacrificed the tidy five thousand he had paid, and let his option slide. Now, when the fellow who did the scenario wrote: 'If you found anything in the scenario that you did not discover in the play, it is because I gave you the effect it would have behind the footlights, which you have not the imagination to see in the printed words,' the Manager only replied 'You are a nice chap. I like you very much, but you are a blanketty-blanketty fool.'" "Which was right?" asked the Journalist. "The scenario man." "How do you know?" "How do I know? Why simply because the play was produced later—ran five years, and drew a couple of million dollars. That's how I know." "By cricky," exclaimed the Youngster, "I believe he thinks his story could earn a million if it had a chance." "I don't say 'no,'" said the Critic, yawning, "but it will never get a chance. I burned the manuscript this morning, and now being delivered of it, I have no more interest in it than a sparrow has in her last year's offspring." "The trouble with you is that you haven't any patience, any staying power. That ought to have been a three volume novel. We would have heard all about their first meeting, their first love, their separation, his marriage, her débuts, etc., etc.," declared the Journalist. "Oh, thunder," said the Doctor. "I think there was quite enough of it.

Don't throw anything at me—I liked it—I liked it! Only I'm sorry she died." "So am I," said the Critic. "That really hurt me." "Because," said the Doctor, shying away toward the door, "I should have liked to know if the child turned out to be a genius. That kind do sometimes," and he disappeared into the doorway. "Anyhow," said the Critic, "I am going to wear laurels until some one tells a better—and I'd like to know why the Journalist looks so pensively thoughtful?" "I am trying to recall who she was—Margaret Dillon." "Don't fret—she may be a 'poor thing,' but she is all 'mine own'—a genuine creation, I am no reporter." "Ah? Then you are more of a sentimentalist than I even dared to dream." "Don't deny it," said the Critic, as he rose and yawned. "So I am going to bed to sleep on my laurels while I may. Good night." "Well," called the Sculptor after him, as he sauntered away, "as one of our mutual friends used to say 'The Indian Summer of Passion scorches.'" "But, alas!" added the other, "it does not always kill." "Witness—" began the Journalist, but the Critic cut him short. "As you love me—not that famous list of yours including so many of the actresses we all know. I can't bear THAT to-night. After all the French have a better phrase for it—'La Crise de quarante ans.'" The Nurse and Divorcée had been very quiet, but here they locked hands, and the former remarked that they prepared to withdraw: "That is our cue to disappear—and you, too, Youngster. These men are far too wise." So we of the discussed sex made a circle with our clasped hand about the Youngster and danced him into the house. The last I saw of the garden that night, as I looked out of my window toward the northeast, with "Namur" beating in my head, the five men had their heads still together, but whether "the other sex" was getting scientifically torn to bits, or they, too, had Namur in their minds I never knew. The next day was very peaceful. We were becoming habituated to the situation. It was a Sunday, and the weather was warm. There had been no real news so far as we knew, except that Japan had lined up with the Allies. The Youngster had come near to striking fire by wondering how the United States, with her dislike for Japan, would view the entering into line of the yellow man, but the spark flickered out, and I imagine we settled down for the story with more eagerness than on the previous evening, especially when the Doctor thrust his hands into his pockets and lifted his chin into the air, as if he were in the tribune. More than one of us smiled at his resemblance to Pierre Janet entering the tribune at the Collège de France, and the Youngster said, under his breath, "A Clinique, I suppose." The Doctor's ears were sharp. "Not a bit," he answered, running his keen brown eyes over us to be sure we were listening before he began: In the days when it was thought that the South End was to be the smart part of Boston, and when streets were laid out along wide tree shaded malls, with a square in the centre, in imitation of some quarters of London,—for Boston was in those days much more English in appearance than it is now,—there was in one of those squares a famous private school. In those days it was rather smart to go to a private school. It was in the days before Boston had much of an immigrant quarter, when some smart families still lived in the old Colonial houses at the North End, and ministers and lawyers and all professional men sent their sons and their daughters to the public schools, at that time probably the best in the world. At this private school, there was, at the time of which I speak, what one might almost call a "principal girl." She was the daughter of a rich banker—his only daughter. The gods all seemed to have been very good to her. She was not only a really beautiful girl, she was, for her age, a distinguished girl,—one of the sort who seemed to do everything better than any one else, and with a lack of self-consciousness or pretension. Every one admired her. Some of her comrades would have loved her if she had given them the chance. But no one could ever get intimate with her.