

# RODMAN

## *the Keeper*

by Constance Fenimore Woolson

---

---



*“Keeper of what? Keeper of the dead. Well, it is easier to keep the dead than the living; and as for the gloom of the thing, the living among whom I have been lately were not a hilarious set.”*

John Rodman sat in the door-way and looked out over his domain. The little cottage behind him was empty of life save himself alone. In one room the slender appointments provided by government for the keeper, who being still alive must sleep and eat, made the bareness doubly bare; in the other the desk and the great ledgers, the ink and pens, the register, the loud-ticking clock on the wall, and the flag folded on a shelf, were all for the kept, whose names, in hastily written, blotted rolls of manuscript, were waiting to be transcribed in the new red-bound ledgers in the keeper's best handwriting day by day, while the clock was to tell him the hour when the flag must rise over the mounds where reposed the bodies of fourteen thousand United States soldiers,--who had languished where once stood the prison-pens, on the opposite slopes now fair and peaceful in the sunset; who had fallen by the way in long marches to and fro under the burning sun; who had fought and died on the many battle-fields that reddened the beautiful State, stretching from the peaks of the marble mountains in the smoky west down to the sea-islands of the ocean border. The last rim of the sun's red ball had sunk below the horizon line, and the western sky glowed with deep rose-color, which faded away above into pink, into the salmon-tint, into shades of that far-away heavenly emerald which the brush of the earthly artist can never reproduce, but which is found sometimes in the iridescent heart of the opal. The small town, a mile distant, stood turning its back on the cemetery; but the keeper could see the pleasant, rambling old mansions each with its rose-garden and neglected outlying fields, the empty negro quarters falling into ruin, and everything just as it stood when on that April morning the first gun was fired on Sumter; apparently not a nail added, not a brushful of paint applied, not a fallen brick replaced, or latch or lock repaired. The keeper had noted these things as he strolled through the town, but not with surprise;



for he had seen the South in its first estate, when, fresh, strong, and fired with enthusiasm, he too had marched away from his village home with the colors flying above and the girls waving their handkerchiefs behind, as the regiment, a thousand strong, filed down the dusty road. That regiment, a weak, scarred two hundred, came back a year later with lagging step and colors tattered and scorched, and the girls could not wave their handkerchiefs, wet and sodden with tears. But the keeper, his wound healed, had gone again; and he had seen with his New England eyes the magnificence and the carelessness of the South, her splendor and negligence, her wealth and thriftlessness, as through Virginia and the fair Carolinas, across Georgia and into sunny Florida, he had marched month by month, first a lieutenant, then captain, and finally major and colonel, as death mowed down those above him, and he and his good conduct were left; everywhere magnificence went hand in hand with neglect, and he had said so as chance now and then threw a conversation in his path.

“We have no such shiftless ways,” he would remark, after he had furtively supplied his prisoner with hard-tack and coffee.

“And no such grand ones either,” Johnny Reb would reply, if he was a man of spirit; and generally he was.

The Yankee, forced to acknowledge the truth of this statement, qualified it by observing that he would rather have more thrift with a little less grandeur; whereupon the other answered that he would not; and there the conversation rested. So now ex-Colonel Rodman, keeper of the national cemetery, viewed the little town in its second estate with philosophic eyes. He no longer felt warming within him his early temptations to put in the missing nail or pick up the rusting axe; “for, if they did these things in a green tree, what will they do in a dry?” he thought.\*\* “It is part of a great problem now working itself out; I am not here to tend the living, but the dead.”

Whereupon, as he walked among the long mounds, a voice seemed to rise from the still ranks below: “While ye have time, do good to men,” it said. “Behold, we are beyond your care.” But the keeper did not heed.

This still evening in early February he looked out over the level waste. The little town stood in the lowlands: there were no hills from whence cometh help--calm heights that lift the soul above earth and its cares; no river to lead the aspirations of the children outward towards the great sea. Everything was monotonous, and the only spirit that rose above the waste was a bitterness for the gained and sorrow for the lost cause. The keeper was the only man whose presence personated the former in their sight, and upon him therefore, as representative, the bitterness fell, not in words, but in averted looks, in sudden silences



when he approached, in withdrawals and avoidance, until he lived and moved in a vacuum; wherever he went there was presently no one save himself; the very shop-keeper who sold him sugar seemed turned into a man of wood, and took his money reluctantly, although the shilling gained stood perhaps for that day's family dinner. So Rodman withdrew himself, and came and went among them no more; the broad acres of his domain gave him as much exercise as his shattered ankle could bear; he ordered his few supplies by the quantity, and began the life of a solitary, his island marked out by the massive granite wall with which the United States government has carefully surrounded those sad Southern cemeteries of hers; sad, not so much from the number of the mounds representing youth and strength cut off in their bloom, for that is but the fortune of war, as for the complete isolation which marks them. "Strangers in a strange land" is the thought of all who, coming and going to and from Florida, turn aside here and there to stand for a moment among the closely ranged graves which seem already a part of the past, that near past which in our rushing American life is even now so far away. The government work was completed before the keeper came; the lines of the trenches were defined by low granite copings, and the comparatively few single mounds were headed by trim little white boards bearing generally the word "unknown," but here and there a name and an age, in most cases a boy from some far-away Northern State; "twenty-one," "twenty-two," said the inscriptions; the dates were those dark years among the sixties, measured now more than by anything else in the number of maidens widowed in heart, and women widowed indeed, who sit still and remember, while the world rushes by. At sunrise the keeper ran up the stars and stripes, and so precise were his ideas of the accessories belonging to the place that from his own small store of money he had taken enough, by stinting himself, to buy a second flag for stormy weather, so that, rain or not, the colors should float over the dead. This was not patriotism so-called, or rather miscalled, it was not sentimental fancy, it was not zeal or triumph; it was simply a sense of the fitness of things, a conscientiousness which had in it nothing of religion, unless indeed a man's endeavor to live up to his own ideal of his duty be a religion. The same feeling led the keeper to spend hours in copying the rolls. "John Andrew Warren, Company G, Eighth New Hampshire Infantry," he repeated, as he slowly wrote the name, giving "John Andrew" clear, bold capitals and a lettering impossible to mistake; "died August 15, 1863, aged twenty-two years. He came from the prison-pen yonder, and lies somewhere in those trenches, I suppose. Now then, John Andrew, don't fancy I am sorrowing for you; no doubt you are better off than I am at this very moment. But none the less, John Andrew, shall pen, ink, and hand do their duty to you. For that I am here."



Infinite pains and labor went into these records of the dead; one hair's-breadth error, and the whole page was replaced by a new one. The same spirit kept the grass carefully away from the low coping of the trenches, kept the graveled paths smooth and the mounds green, and the bare little cottage neat as a man-of-war; when the keeper cooked his dinner, the door towards the east, where the dead lay, was scrupulously closed, nor was it opened until everything was in perfect order again. At sunset the flag was lowered, and then it was the keeper's habit to walk slowly up and down the path until the shadows veiled the mounds on each side, and there was nothing save the peaceful green of earth. "So time will efface our little lives and sorrows," he mused, "and we shall be as nothing in the indistinguishable past." Yet none the less did he fulfill the duties of every day and hour with exactness. "At least they shall not say that I was lacking," he murmured to himself as he thought vaguely of the future beyond these graves. Who "they" were, it would have troubled him to formulate, since he was one of the many sons whom New England in this generation sends forth with a belief composed entirely of negatives. As the season advanced, he worked all day in the sunshine. "My garden looks well," he said. "I like this cemetery because it is the original resting-place of the dead who lie beneath. They were not brought here from distant places, gathered up by contract, numbered and described like so much merchandise; their first repose has not been broken, their peace has been undisturbed. Hasty burials the prison authorities gave them; the thin, starved\*\*\* bodies were tumbled into the trenches by men almost as starved, for the whole State went hungry in those dark days. There were not many prayers, no tears, as the dead-carts went the rounds. But the prayers had been said, and the tears had fallen, while the poor fellows were still alive in the pens yonder; and when at last death came, it was like a release. They suffered long; and I for one believe that therefore shall their rest be long,--long and sweet."

After a time began the rain, the soft, persistent, gray rain of the Southern lowlands, and he stayed within and copied another thousand names into the ledger. He would not allow himself the companionship of a dog lest the creature should bark at night and disturb the quiet. There was no one to hear save himself, and it would have been a friendly sound as he lay awake on his narrow iron bed, but it seemed to him against the spirit of the place. He would not smoke, although he had the soldier's fondness for a pipe. Many a dreary evening, beneath a hastily built shelter of boughs, when the rain poured down and everything was comfortless, he had found solace in the curling smoke; but now it seemed to him that it would be incongruous, and at times he almost felt as if it would be selfish too. "They cannot smoke, you know, down there under the wet grass," he thought, as standing at the window



he looked towards the ranks of the mounds stretching across the eastern end from side to side; "my parade-ground," he called it. And then he would smile at his own fancies, draw the curtain to, shut out the rain and the night, light his lamp, and go to work on the ledgers again. Some of the names lingered in his memory; he felt as if he had known the men who bore them, as if they had been boys together and were friends even now although separated for a time. "James Marvin, Company B, Fifth Maine. The Fifth Maine was in the seven days' battle. I say, do you remember that retreat down the Quaker church road, and the way Phil Kearney held the rear-guard firm?" And over the whole seven days he wandered with his mute friend, who remembered everything and everybody in the most satisfactory way. One of the little head-boards in the parade-ground attracted him peculiarly because the name inscribed was his own: "---- Rodman, Company A, One Hundred and Sixth New York."

"I remember that regiment; it came from the extreme northern part of the State; ---- Rodman must have melted down here, coming as he did from the half-arctic region along the St. Lawrence. I wonder what he thought of the first hot day, say in South Carolina, along those simmering rice-fields." He grew into the habit of pausing for a moment by the side of this grave every morning and evening. "---- Rodman. It might easily have been John. And then, where should I be?"

But ---- Rodman remained silent, and the keeper, after pulling up a weed or two and trimming the grass over his relative, went off to his duties again. "I am convinced that ---- is a relative," he said to himself; "distant, perhaps, but still a kinsman."

One April day the heat was almost insupportable; but the sun's rays were not those brazen beams that sometimes in Northern cities burn the air and scorch the pavements to a white heat; rather were they soft and still; the moist earth exhaled her richness, not a leaf stirred, and the whole level country seemed sitting in a hot vapor-bath. In the early dawn the keeper had performed his outdoor tasks, but all day he remained almost without stirring in his chair between two windows, striving to exist. At high noon out came a little black bringing his supplies from the town, whistling and shuffling along, gay as a lark; the keeper watched him coming slowly down the white road, loitering by the way in the hot blaze, stopping to turn a somersault or two, to dangle over a bridge rail, to execute various impromptu capers all by himself. He reached the gate at last, entered, and having come all the way up the path in a hornpipe step, he set down his basket at the door to indulge in one long and final double-shuffle before knocking. "Stop that!" said the keeper through the closed blinds. The little darkey darted back; but as nothing further came out of the window,--a boot, for instance, or some other stray missile,--he took courage, showed his ivories, and drew near again. "Do you suppose I am going to have you stirring up the heat in that way?" demanded the keeper.





The little black grinned, but made no reply, unless smoothing the hot white sand with his black toes could be construed as such; he now removed his rimless hat and made a bow.

“Is it, or is it not warm?” asked the keeper, as a naturalist might inquire of a salamander, not referring to his own so much as to the salamander’s ideas on the subject.

“Dunno, mars’,” replied the little black.

“How do you feel?”

“Spects I feel all right, mars’.”

The keeper gave up the investigation, and presented to the salamander a nickel cent. “I suppose there is no such thing as a cool spring in all this melting country,” he said.

But the salamander indicated with his thumb a clump of trees on the green plain north of the cemetery. “Ole Mars’ Ward’s place,--cole spring dah.” He then departed, breaking into a run after he had passed the gate, his ample mouth watering at the thought of a certain chunk of taffy at the mercantile establishment kept by aunt Dinah in a corner of her one-roomed cabin. At sunset the keeper went thirstily out with a tin pail on his arm, in search of the cold spring. “If it could only be like the spring down under the rocks where I used to drink when I was a boy!” he thought. He had never walked in that direction before. Indeed, now that he had abandoned the town, he seldom went beyond the walls of the cemetery. An old road led across to the clump of trees, through fields run to waste, and following it he came to the place, a deserted house with tumble-down fences and overgrown garden, the out-buildings indicating that once upon a time there were many servants and a prosperous master. The house was of wood, large on the ground, with encircling piazzas; across the front door rough bars had been nailed, and the closed blinds were protected in the same manner; from long want of paint the clapboards were gray and mossy, and the floor of the piazza had fallen in here and there from decay. The keeper decided that his cemetery was a much more cheerful place than this, and then he looked around for the spring. Behind the house the ground sloped down; it must be there. He went around and came suddenly upon a man lying on an old rug outside of a back door. “Excuse me. I thought nobody lived here,” he said.

“Nobody does,” replied the man; “I am not much of a body, am I?”

His left arm was gone, and his face was thin and worn with long illness; he closed his eyes after speaking, as though the few words had exhausted him.

“I came for water from a cold spring you have here, somewhere,” pursued the keeper, contemplating the wreck before him with the interest of one who has himself been severely wounded and knows the long, weary pain. The man waved his hand towards the slope



without unclosing his eyes, and Rodman went off with his pail and found a little shady hollow, once curbed and paved with white pebbles, but now neglected, like all the place. The water was cold, however, deliciously cold; he filled his pail and thought that perhaps after all he would exert himself to make coffee, now that the sun was down; it would taste better made of this cold water. When he came up the slope the man's eyes were open.

"Have some water?" asked Rodman.

"Yes; there's a gourd inside."

The keeper entered, and found himself in a large, bare room; in one corner was some straw covered with an old counterpane, in another a table and chair; a kettle hung in the deep fireplace, and a few dishes stood on a shelf; by the door on a nail hung a gourd; he filled it and gave it to the host of this desolate abode. The man drank with eagerness. "Pomp has gone to town," he said, "and I could not get down to the spring to-day, I have had so much pain."

"And when will Pomp return?"

"He should be here now; he is very late to-night."

"Can I get you anything?"

"No, thank you; he will soon be here."

The keeper looked out over the waste; there was no one in sight. He was not a man of any especial kindness,--he had himself been too hardly treated in life for that,--but he could not find it in his heart to leave this helpless creature all alone with night so near. So he sat down on the door-step. "I will rest awhile," he said, not asking but announcing it. The man had turned away and closed his eyes again, and they both remained silent, busy with their own thoughts; for each had recognized the ex-soldier, Northern and Southern, in portions of the old uniforms, and in the accent. The war and its memories were still very near to the maimed, poverty-stricken Confederate; and the other knew that they were, and did not obtrude himself.

Twilight fell, and no one came.

"Let me get you something," said Rodman; for the face looked ghastly as the fever abated. The other refused. Darkness came; still, no one.

"Look here," said Rodman, rising; "I have been wounded myself, was in hospital for months; I know how you feel,--you must have food; a cup of tea, now, and a slice of toast, brown and thin."

"I have not tasted tea or wheaten bread for weeks," answered the man; his voice died off into a wail, as though feebleness and pain had drawn the cry from him in spite of himself.



Rodman lighted a match; there was no candle, only a piece of pitch-pine stuck in an iron socket on the wall; he set fire to this primitive torch and looked around.

“There is nothing there,” said the man outside, making an effort to speak carelessly; “my servant went to town for supplies. Do not trouble yourself to wait; he will come presently, and--and--I want nothing.”

But Rodman saw through proud poverty’s lie; he knew that irregular quavering of the voice, and that trembling of the hand; the poor fellow had but one to tremble. He continued his search; but the bare room gave back nothing, not a crumb.

“Well, if you are not hungry,” he said briskly, “I am, hungry as a bear; and I’ll tell you what I am going to do. I live not far from here, and I live all alone too, I have n’t a servant as you have; let me take supper here with you, just for a change, and if your servant comes, so much the better, he can wait upon us. I’ll run over and bring back the things.”

He was gone without waiting for reply; the shattered ankle made good time over the waste, and soon returned, limping a little but bravely hasting, while on a tray came the keeper’s best supplies, Irish potatoes, corned beef, wheaten bread, butter, and coffee,--for he would not eat the hot biscuits, the corn-cake, the bacon and hominy of the country, and constantly made little New England meals for himself in his prejudiced little kitchen. The pine torch flared in the door-way; a breeze had come down from the far mountains and cooled the air. Rodman kindled a fire on the cavernous hearth, filled the kettle, found a saucepan, and commenced operations, while the other lay outside and watched every movement in the lighted room.

“All ready; let me help you in. Here we are now; fried potatoes, cold beef, mustard, toast, butter, and tea. Eat, man; and the next time I am laid up, you shall come over and cook for me.”

Hunger conquered, and the other ate, ate as he had not eaten for months. As he was finishing a second cup of tea, a slow step came around the house; it was the missing Pomp, an old negro, bent and shriveled, who carried a bag of meal and some bacon in his basket. “That is what they live on,” thought the keeper.

He took leave without more words. “I suppose now I can be allowed to go home in peace,” he grumbled to conscience. The negro followed him across what was once the lawn. “Fin’ Mars’ Ward mighty low,” he said apologetically, as he swung open the gate which still hung between its posts, although the fence was down, “but I hurried an’ hurried as fas’ as I could; it’s mighty fur to de town. Proud to see you, sah; hope you’ll come again. Fine fambly, de Wards, sah, befo’ de war.”





“How long has he been in this state?” asked the keeper.

“Ever sence one ob de las’ battles, sah; but he’s worse sence we come yer, ‘bout a mont’ back.”

“Who owns the house? Is there no one to see to him? has he no friends?”

“House b’long to Mars’ Ward’s uncle; fine place once, befo’ de war; he’s dead now, and dah’s nobuddy but Miss Bettina, an’ she’s gone off somewhuz. Propah place, sah, fur Mars’ Ward,--own uncle’s house,” said the old slave, loyally striving to maintain the family dignity even then.

“Are there no better rooms,--no furniture?”

“Sartin; but--but Miss Bettina, she took de keys; she did n’t know we was comin’”--

“You had better send for Miss Bettina, I think,” said the keeper, starting homeward with his tray, washing his hands, as it were, of any future responsibility in the affair.

The next day he worked in his garden, for clouds veiled the sun and exercise was possible; but, nevertheless, he could not forget the white face on the old rug. “Pshaw!” he said to himself, “have n’t I seen tumble-down old houses and battered human beings before this?”

At evening came a violent thunderstorm, and the splendor of the heavens was terrible. “We have chained you, mighty spirit,” thought the keeper as he watched the lightning, “and some time we shall learn the laws of the winds and foretell the storms; then, prayers will no more be offered in churches to alter the weather than they would be offered now to alter an eclipse. Yet back of the lightning and the wind lies the power of the great Creator, just the same.”

But still, into his musings crept, with shadowy persistence, the white face on the rug.

“Nonsense!” he exclaimed, “if white faces are going around as ghosts, how about the fourteen thousand white faces that went under the sod down yonder? If they could arise and walk, the whole State would be filled and no more carpet-baggers needed.” So, having balanced the one with the fourteen thousand, he went to bed.

Daylight brought rain,--still, soft, gray rain; the next morning showed the same, and the third likewise, the nights keeping up their part with low-down clouds and steady pattering on the roof. “If there was a river here, we should have a flood,” thought the keeper, drumming idly on his window-pane. Memory brought back the steep New England hill-sides shedding their rain into the brooks, which grew in a night to torrents and filled the rivers so that they overflowed their banks; then, suddenly, an old house in a sunken corner of a waste rose before his eyes, and he seemed to see the rain dropping from a moldy ceiling on the straw where a white face lay.



“Really, I have nothing else to do, you know,” he remarked in an apologetic way to himself, as he and his umbrella went along the old road; and he repeated the remark as he entered the room where the man lay, just as he had fancied, on the damp straw.

“The weather is unpleasant,” said the man. “Pomp, bring a chair.”

Pomp brought one, the only one, and the visitor sat down. A fire smoldered on the hearth and puffed out acrid smoke now and then, as if the rain had clogged the soot in the long-neglected chimney; from the streaked ceiling oozing drops fell with a dull splash into little pools on the decayed floor; the door would not close; the broken panes were stopped with rags, as if the old servant had tried to keep out the damp; in the ashes a corn-cake was baking.

“I am afraid you have not been so well during these long rainy days,” said the keeper, scanning the face on the straw.

“My old enemy, rheumatism,” answered the man; “the first sunshine will drive it away.”

They talked awhile, or rather the keeper talked, for the other seemed hardly able to speak, as the waves of pain swept over him; then the visitor went outside and called Pomp out. “Is there anyone to help him, or not?” he asked impatiently.

“Fine fambly, befo’ de war,” began Pomp.

“Never mind all that; is there anyone to help him now,--yes or no?”

“No,” said the old black with a burst of despairing truthfulness; “Miss Bettina, she’s as poor as Mars’ Ward, an’ dere’s no one else. He’s had noth’n but hard corn-cake for three days, an’ he can’t swaller it no more.”

The next morning saw Ward De Rosset lying on the white pallet in the keeper’s cottage, and old Pomp, marveling at the cleanliness all around him, installed as nurse. A strange asylum for a Confederate soldier, was it not? But he knew nothing of the change, which he would have fought with his last breath if consciousness had remained; returning fever, however, had absorbed his senses, and then it was that the keeper and the slave had borne him slowly across the waste, resting many times, but accomplishing the journey at last.

That evening John Rodman, strolling to and fro in the dusky twilight, paused alongside of the other Rodman. “I do not want him here, and that is the plain truth,” he said, pursuing the current of his thoughts. “He fills the house; he and Pomp together disturb all my ways. He’ll be ready to fling a brick at me too, when his senses come back; small thanks shall I have for lying on the floor, giving up all my comforts, and, what is more, riding over the spirit of the place with a vengeance!” He threw himself down on the grass beside the mound



and lay looking up towards the stars, which were coming out, one by one, in the deep blue of the Southern night. "With a vengeance, did I say? That is it exactly,--the vengeance of kindness. The poor fellow has suffered horribly in body and in estate, and now ironical Fortune throws him in my way as if saying, 'Let us see how far your selfishness will yield.' This is not a question of magnanimity; there is no magnanimity about it, for the war is over, and you Northerners have gained every point for which you fought; this is merely a question between man and man; it would be the same if the sufferer was a poor Federal, one of the carpet-baggers, whom you despise so, for instance, or a pagan Chinaman. And Fortune is right; don't you think so, Blank Rodman? I put it to you, now, to one who has suffered the extreme rigor of the other side,--those prison-pens yonder."

Whereupon Blank Rodman answered that he had fought for a great cause and that he knew it, although a plain man and not given to speech-making; he was not one of those who had sat safely at home all through the war, and now belittled it and made light of its issues. (Here a murmur came up from the long line of the trenches, as though all the dead had cried out.) But now the points for which he had fought being gained, and strife ended, it was the plain duty of every man to encourage peace. For his part he bore no malice; he was glad the poor Confederate was up in the cottage, and he did not think any the less of the keeper for bringing him there. He would like to add that he thought more of him; but he was sorry to say that he was well aware what an effort it was, and how almost grudgingly the charity began.

If Blank Rodman did not say this, at least the keeper imagined that he did. "That is what he would have said," he thought. "I am glad you do not object," he added, pretending to himself that he had not noticed the rest of the remark.

"We do not object to the brave soldier who honestly fought for his cause, even though he fought on the other side," answered Blank Rodman for the whole fourteen thousand. "But never let a coward, a double-face, or a flippant-tongued idler walk over our heads. It would make us rise in our graves!"

And the keeper seemed to see a shadowy pageant sweep by,--gaunt soldiers with white faces, arming anew against the subtle product of peace: men who said, "It was nothing! Behold, we saw it with our eyes!"--stay-at-home eyes.

The third day the fever abated, and Ward De Rosset noticed his surroundings. Old Pomp acknowledged that he had been moved, but veiled the locality: "To a friend's house, Mars' Ward."

"But I have no friends, now, Pomp," said the weak voice.



Pomp was very much amused at the absurdity of this. "No frien's! Mars' Ward no friens'!" He was obliged to go out of the room to hide his laughter. The sick man lay feebly thinking that the bed was cool and fresh, and the closed green blinds pleasant; his thin fingers stroked the linen sheet, and his eyes wandered from object to object. The only thing that broke the rule of bare utility in the simple room was a square of white drawing-paper on the wall, upon which was inscribed in ornamental text the following verse:--

"Toujours femme varie,  
Bien fou qui s'y fie;  
Une femme souvent  
N'est qu'une plume au vent."

With the persistency of illness the eyes and mind of Ward De Rosset went over and over this distich; he knew something of French, but was unequal to the effort of translating; the rhymes alone caught his vagrant fancy. "Toujours femme varie," he said to himself over and over again, and when the keeper entered, he said it to him.

"Certainly," answered the keeper; "bien fou qui s'y fie. How do you find yourself, this morning?"

"I have not found myself at all, so far. Is this your house?"

"Yes."

"Pomp told me I was in a friend's house," observed the sick man, vaguely.

"Well, it is n't an enemy's. Had any breakfast? No? Better not talk, then."

He went to the detached shed which served for a kitchen, upset all Pomp's clumsy arrangements, and ordered him outside; then he set to work and prepared a delicate breakfast with his best skill. The sick man eagerly eyed the tray as he entered. "Better have your hands and face sponged off, I think," said Rodman; and then he propped him up skillfully, and left him to his repast. The grass needed mowing on the parade-ground; he shouldered his scythe and started down the path, viciously kicking the gravel to and fro as he walked. "Was n't solitude your principal idea, John Rodman, when you applied for this place?" he demanded of himself; "how much of it are you likely to have with sick men, and sick men's servants, and so forth?"

The "and so forth," thrown in as a rhetorical climax, turned into reality and arrived bodily upon the scene,--a climax indeed; one afternoon, returning late to the cottage, he found a girl sitting by the pallet,--a girl young and dimpled and dewy, one of the creamy roses of the South that, even in the bud, are richer in color and luxuriance than any Northern flower. He saw her through the door, and paused; distressed old Pomp met him and beckoned



him cautiously outside. "Miss Bettina," he whispered gutturally, "she's come back from somewhuz, an' she's awful mad 'cause Mars' Ward's here. I tole her all 'bout 'em,--de leaks an' de rheumatiz an' de hard corn-cake, but she done gone scole me; an' Mars' Ward, he know now whar he is, an' he mad too."

"Is the girl a fool?" said Rodman. He was just beginning to rally a little. He stalked into the room and confronted her. "I have the honor of addressing"--

"Miss Ward."

"And I am John Rodman, keeper of the national cemetery."

This she ignored entirely; it was as though he had said, "I am John Jones, the coachman." Coachmen were useful in their way; but their names were unimportant.

The keeper sat down and looked at his new visitor. The little creature fairly radiated scorn; her pretty head was thrown back, her eyes, dark brown fringed with long dark lashes, hardly deigned a glance; she spoke to him as though he was something to be paid and dismissed like any other mechanic.

"We are indebted to you for some days' board, I believe, keeper, medicines, I presume, and general attendance; my cousin will be removed to-day to our own residence; I wish to pay now what he owes."

The keeper saw that her dress was old and faded; the small black shawl had evidently been washed and many times mended; the old-fashioned knitted purse she held in her hand was lank with long famine.

"Very well," he said, "if you choose to treat a kindness in that way, I consider five dollars a day none too much for the annoyance, expense, and trouble I have suffered. Let me see; five days,--or is it six? Yes--thirty dollars, Miss Ward."

He looked at her steadily; she flushed; "The money will be sent to you," she began haughtily; then, hesitatingly, "I must ask a little time"--

"Oh, Betty, Betty, you know you cannot pay it. Why try to disguise--But that does not excuse you for bringing me here," said the sick man, turning towards his host with an attempt to speak fiercely, which ended in a faltering quaver.

All this time the old slave stood anxiously outside of the door; in the pauses they could hear his feet shuffling as he waited for the decision of his superiors. The keeper rose and threw open the blinds of the window that looked out on the distant parade-ground. "Bringing you here," he repeated; "here; that is my offense, is it? There they lie, fourteen thousand brave men and true. Could they come back to earth, they would be the first to pity and aid you, now that you are down. So would it be with you if the case were reversed; for a soldier is





generous to a soldier. It was not your own heart that spoke then; it was the small venom of a woman, that here, as everywhere through the South, is playing its rancorous part."

The sick man gazed out through the window, seeing for the first time the far-spreading ranks of the dead. He was very weak, and the keeper's words had touched him; his eyes were suffused with tears. But Miss Ward rose with a flashing glance. She turned her back full upon the keeper and ignored his very existence. "I will take you home immediately, Ward,--this very evening," she said.

"A nice comfortable place for a sick man," commented the keeper, scornfully. "I am going out now, De Rosset, to prepare your supper; you had better have one good meal before you go."

He disappeared; but as he went he heard the sick man say, deprecatingly, "It is n't very comfortable over at the old house now, indeed it is n't, Betty; I suffered"--and the girl's passionate outburst in reply. Then he closed his door and set to work.

When he returned, half an hour later, Ward was lying back exhausted on the pillows, and his cousin sat leaning her head upon her hand; she had been weeping, and she looked very desolate, he noticed, sitting there in what was to her an enemy's country. Hunger is a strong master, however, especially when allied to weakness; and the sick man ate with eagerness.

"I must go back," said the girl, rising. "A wagon will be sent out for you, Ward; Pomp will help you."

But Ward had gained a little strength as well as obstinacy with the nourishing food. "Not to-night," he said.

"Yes; to-night."

"But I cannot go to-night; you are unreasonable, Bettina. To-morrow will do as well, if go I must."

"If go you must! You do not want to go, then--to go to our own home--and with me"--Her voice broke; she turned towards the door.

The keeper stepped forward: "This is all nonsense, Miss Ward," he said, "and you know it. Your cousin is in no state to be moved. Wait a week or two, and he can go in safety. But do not dare to offer me your money again; my kindness was to the soldier, not to the man, and as such he can accept it. Come out and see him as often as you please. I shall not intrude upon you. Pomp, take the lady home."

And the lady went.

Then began a remarkable existence for the four: a Confederate soldier lying ill in the keeper's cottage of a national cemetery, a rampant little rebel coming out daily to a place



which was to her anathema-maranatha, a cynical, misanthropic keeper sleeping on the floor and enduring every variety of discomfort for a man he never saw before,--a man belonging to an idle, arrogant class he detested,--and an old black freedman allowing himself to be taught the alphabet in order to gain permission to wait on his master,--master no longer in law,--with all the devotion of his loving old heart. For the keeper had announced to Pomp that he must learn his alphabet or go; after all these years of theory, he, as a New Englander, could not stand by and see precious knowledge shut from the black man. So he opened it; and mighty dull work he found it.

Ward De Rosset did not rally as rapidly as they expected. The white-haired doctor from the town rode out on horseback, pacing slowly up the graveled roadway with a scowl on his brow, casting, as he dismounted, a furtive glance down towards the parade-ground. His horse and his coat were alike old and worn, and his broad shoulders were bent with long service in the miserably provided Confederate hospitals, where he had striven to do his duty through every day and every night of those shadowed years. Cursing the incompetency in high places, cursing the mismanagement of the entire medical department of the Confederate army, cursing the recklessness and indifference which left the men suffering for want of proper hospitals and hospital stores, he yet went on resolutely doing his best with the poor means in his control until the last. Then he came home, he and his old horse, and went the rounds again, he prescribing for whooping-cough or measles, and Dobbin waiting outside; the only difference was that fees were small and good meals scarce for both, not only for the man but for the beast. The doctor sat down and chatted awhile kindly with De Rosset, whose father and uncle had been dear friends of his in the bright, prosperous days; then he left a few harmless medicines and rose to go, his gaze resting a moment on Miss Ward, then on Pomp, as if he were hesitating. But he said nothing until on the walk outside he met the keeper, and recognized a person to whom he could tell the truth. "There is nothing to be done; he may recover, he may not; it is a question of strength, merely. He needs no medicines, only nourishing food, rest, and careful tendance."

"He shall have them," answered the keeper, briefly. And then the old gentleman mounted his horse and rode away, his first and last visit to a national cemetery.

"National!" he said to himself,--"national!"

All talk of moving De Rosset ceased, but Miss Ward moved into the old house. There was not much to move: herself, her one trunk, and Marí, a black attendant, whose name probably began life as Maria, since the accent still dwelt on the curtailed last syllable. The keeper went there once, and once only, and then it was an errand for the sick man, whose



fancies came sometimes at inconvenient hours,--when Pomp had gone to town, for instance. On this occasion the keeper entered the mockery of a gate and knocked at the front door, from which the bars had been removed; the piazza still showed its decaying planks, but quick-growing summer vines had been planted, and were now encircling the old pillars and veiling all defects with their greenery. It was a woman's pathetic effort to cover up what cannot be covered--poverty. The blinds on one side were open and white curtains waved to and fro in the breeze; into this room he was ushered by Marí. Matting lay on the floor, streaked here and there ominously by the dampness from the near ground. The furniture was of dark mahogany, handsome in its day: chairs, a heavy pier table with low-down glass, into which no one by any possibility could look unless he had eyes in his ankles, a sofa with a stiff round pillow of hair-cloth under each curved end, and a mirror with a compartment framed off at the top, containing a picture of shepherds and shepherdesses, and lambs with blue ribbons around their necks, all enjoying themselves in the most natural and life-like manner. Flowers stood on the high mantelpiece, but their fragrance could not overcome the faint odor of the damp straw-matting. On a table were books, a life of General Lee, and three or four shabby little volumes printed at the South during the war, waifs of prose and poetry of that highly wrought, richly colored style which seems indigenous to Southern soil.

"Some way, the whole thing reminds me of a funeral," thought the keeper.

Miss Ward entered, and the room bloomed at once; at least, that is what a lover would have said. Rodman, however, merely noticed that she bloomed, and not the room, and he said to himself that she would not bloom long, if she continued to live in such a moldy place. Their conversation in these days was excessively polite, shortened to the extreme minimum possible, and conducted without the aid of the eyes, at least on one side. Rodman had discovered that Miss Ward never looked at him, and so he did not look at her, that is, not often; he was human, however, and she was delightfully pretty. On this occasion they exchanged exactly five sentences, and then he departed, but not before his quick eyes had discovered that the rest of the house was in even worse condition than this parlor, which, by the way, Miss Ward considered quite a grand apartment; she had been down near the coast, trying to teach school, and there the desolation was far greater than here, both armies having passed back and forward over the ground, foragers out, and the torch at work more than once.

"Will there ever come a change for the better?" thought the keeper, as he walked homeward. "What an enormous stone has got to be rolled up hill! But at least, John Rodman, you need not go to work at it; you are not called upon to lend your shoulder."



None the less, however, did he call out Pomp that very afternoon and sternly teach him “E” and “F,” using the smooth white sand for a blackboard, and a stick for chalk. Pomp’s primer was a government placard hanging on the wall of the office. It read as follows:--

IN THIS CEMETERY REPOSE THE REMAINS  
OF  
FOURTEEN THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED AND  
TWENTY-ONE  
UNITED STATES SOLDIERS.

“Tell me not in mournful numbers  
Life is but an empty dream;  
For the soul is dead that slumbers,  
And things are not what they seem  
“Life is real! Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal;  
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,  
Was not written of the soul!”

“The only known instance of the government’s condescending to poetry,” the keeper had thought, when he first read this placard. It was placed there for the instruction and edification of visitors, but no visitors coming, he took the liberty of using it as a primer for Pomp. The large letters served the purpose admirably, and Pomp learned the entire quotation; what he thought of it has not transpired. Miss Ward came over daily to see her cousin. At first she brought him soups and various concoctions from her own kitchen,--the leaky cavern, once the dining room, where the soldier had taken refuge after his last dismissal from hospital; but the keeper’s soups were richer, and free from the taint of smoke; his martial laws of neatness even disorderly old Pomp dared not disobey, and the sick man soon learned the difference. He thanked the girl, who came bringing the dishes over carefully in her own dimpled hands, and then, when she was gone, he sent them untasted away. By chance Miss Ward learned this, and wept bitter tears over it; she continued to come, but her poor little soups and jellies she brought no more.

One morning in May the keeper was working near the flag-staff, when his eyes fell upon a procession coming down the road which led from the town and turning towards the cemetery; no one ever came that way, what could it mean? It drew near, entered the



gate, and showed itself to be negroes walking two and two, old uncles and aunties, young men and girls, and even little children, all dressed in their best; a very poor best, sometimes gravely ludicrous imitations of "ole mars'," or "ole miss'," sometimes mere rags bravely patched together and adorned with a strip of black calico or rosette of black ribbon; not one was without a badge of mourning. All carried flowers, common blossoms from the little gardens behind the cabins that stretched around the town on the outskirts,--the new forlorn cabins with their chimneys of piled stones and ragged patches of corn; each little darkey had his bouquet and marched solemnly along, rolling his eyes around, but without even the beginning of a smile, while the elders moved forward with gravity, the bubbling, irrepressible gaiety of the negro subdued by the newborn dignity of the freedman.

"Memorial Day," thought the keeper; "I had forgotten it."

"Will you do us de hono', sah, to take de head ob de processio', sah?" said the leader, with a ceremonious bow. Now the keeper had not much sympathy with the strewing of flowers, North or South; he had seen the beautiful ceremony more than once turned into a political demonstration; here, however, in this small, isolated, interior town, there was nothing of that kind; the whole population of white faces laid their roses and wept true tears on the graves of their lost ones in the village churchyard when the Southern Memorial Day came round, and just as naturally the whole population of black faces went out to the national cemetery with their flowers on the day when, throughout the North, spring blossoms were laid on the graves of the soldiers, from the little Maine village to the stretching ranks of Arlington, from Greenwood to the far western burial-places of San Francisco. The keeper joined the procession and led the way to the parade-ground. As they approached the trenches, the leader began singing and all joined. "Swing low, sweet chariot," sang the freedmen, and their hymn rose and fell with strange, sweet harmony,--one of those wild, unwritten melodies which the North heard with surprise and marveling when, after the war, bands of singers came to their cities and sang the songs of slavery, in order to gain for their children the coveted education. "Swing low, sweet chariot," sang the freedmen, and two by two they passed along, strewing the graves with flowers till all the green was dotted with color. It was a pathetic sight to see some of the old men and women, ignorant field-hands, bent, dull-eyed, and past the possibility of education even in its simplest forms, carefully placing their poor flowers to the best advantage. They knew dimly that the men who lay beneath those mounds had done something wonderful for them and for their children, and so they came bringing their blossoms, with little intelligence but with much love.





The ceremony over, they retired; as he turned, the keeper caught a glimpse of Miss Ward's face at the window.

"Hope we's not makin' too free, sah," said the leader, as the procession, with many a bow and scrape, took leave, "but we's kep' de day now two years, sah, befo' you came, sah, an' we's teachin' de chil'en to keep it, sah."

The keeper returned to the cottage. "Not a white face," he said.

"Certainly not," replied Miss Ward, crisply.

"I know some graves at the North, Miss Ward, graves of Southern soldiers, and I know some Northern women who do not scorn to lay a few flowers on the lonely mounds as they pass by with their blossoms on our Memorial Day."

"You are fortunate. They must be angels. We have no angels here."

"I am inclined to believe you are right," said the keeper.

That night old Pomp, who had remained invisible in the kitchen during the ceremony, stole away in the twilight and came back with a few flowers; Rodman saw him going down towards the parade-ground, and watched. The old man had but a few blossoms; he arranged them hastily on the mounds with many a furtive glance towards the house, and then stole back, satisfied; he had performed his part.

Ward De Rosset lay on his pallet, apparently unchanged; he seemed neither stronger nor weaker. He had grown childishly dependent upon his host, and wearied for him, as the Scotch say; but Rodman withstood his fancies, and gave him only the evenings, when Miss Bettina was not there. One afternoon, however, it rained so violently that he was forced to seek shelter; he set himself to work on the ledgers; he was on the ninth thousand now. But the sick man heard his step in the outer room, and called in his weak voice, "Rodman,--Rodman." After a time he went in, and it ended in his staying, for the patient was nervous and irritable, and he pitied the nurse, who seemed able to please him in nothing. De Rosset turned with a sigh of relief towards the strong hands that lifted him readily, towards the composed manner, towards the man's voice that seemed to bring a breeze from outside into the close room; animated, cheered, he talked volubly. The keeper listened, answered once in a while, and quietly took the rest of the afternoon into his own hands. Miss Ward yielded to the silent change, leaned back, and closed her eyes. She looked exhausted and for the first time pallid; the loosened dark hair curled in little rings about her temples, and her lips were parted as though she was too tired to close them; for hers were not the thin, straight lips that shut tight naturally, like the straight line of a closed box. The sick man talked on. "Come, Rodman," he said, after a while, "I have read that lying verse of yours over at least ten



thousand and fifty-nine times; please tell me its history; I want to have something definite to think of when I read it for the ten thousand and sixtieth.”

“Toujours femme varie  
Bien fou qui s’y fie;  
Une femme souvent  
N’est qu’une plume au vent,”

read the keeper slowly, with his execrable English accent. “Well, I don’t know that I have any objection to telling the story. I am not sure but that it will do me good to hear it all over myself in plain language again.”

“Then it concerns yourself,” said De Rosset; “so much the better. I hope it will be, as the children say, the truth, and long.”

“It will be the truth, but not long. When the war broke out I was twenty-eight years old, living with my mother on our farm in New England. My father and two brothers had died and left me the homestead, otherwise I should have broken away and sought fortune farther westward, where the lands are better and life is more free. But mother loved the house, the fields, and every crooked tree. She was alone, and so I stayed with her. In the centre of the village green stood the square, white meeting-house, and near by the small cottage where the pastor lived; the minister’s daughter, Mary, was my promised wife. Mary was a slender little creature with a profusion of pale flaxen hair, large, serious blue eyes, and small, delicate features; she was timid almost to a fault; her voice was low and gentle. She was not eighteen, and we were to wait a year. The war came, and I volunteered, of course, and marched away; we wrote to each other often; my letters were full of the camp and skirmishes; hers told of the village, how the widow Brown had fallen ill, and how it was feared that Squire Stafford’s boys were lapsing into evil ways. Then came the day when my regiment marched to the field of its slaughter, and soon after our shattered remnant went home. Mary cried over me, and came out every day to the farm house with her bunches of violets; she read aloud to me from her good little books, and I used to lie and watch her profile bending over the page, with the light falling on her flaxen hair low down against the small, white throat. Then my wound healed, and I went again, this time for three years; and Mary’s father blessed me, and said that when peace came he would call me son, but not before, for these were no times for marrying or giving in marriage. He was a good man, a red-hot abolitionist, and a roaring lion as regards temperance; but nature had made him so small in body that no one was much frightened when he roared. I said that I went for three years; but eight years have passed and I have never been back to the village. First, mother died. Then Mary turned false. I sold the



farm by letter and lost the money three months afterwards in an unfortunate investment; my health failed. Like many another Northern soldier I remembered the healing climate of the South; its soft airs came back to me when the snow lay deep on the fields and the sharp wind whistled around the poor tavern where the moneyless, half-crippled volunteer sat coughing by the fire. I applied for this place and obtained it. That is all.”

“But it is not all,” said the sick man, raising himself on his elbow; “you have not told half yet, nor anything at all about the French verse.”

“Oh--that? There was a little Frenchman staying at the hotel; he had formerly been a dancing-master, and was full of dry, withered conceits, although he looked like a thin and bilious old ape dressed as a man. He taught me, or tried to teach me, various wise sayings, among them this one, which pleased my fancy so much that I gave him twenty-five cents to write it out in large text for me.”

“Toujours femme varie,” repeated De Rosset; “but you don’t really think so, do you, Rodman?”

“I do. But they cannot help it; it is their nature. I beg your pardon, Miss Ward. I was speaking as though you were not here.”

Miss Ward’s eyelids barely acknowledged his existence; that was all. But some time after she remarked to her cousin that it was only in New England that one found that pale flaxen hair.

June was waning, when suddenly the summons came; Ward De Rosset died. He was unconscious towards the last, and death, in the guise of sleep, bore away his soul. They carried him home to the old house, and from there the funeral started, a few family carriages, dingy and battered, following the hearse, for death revived the old neighborhood feeling; that honor at least they could pay--the sonless mothers and the widows who lived shut up in the old houses with everything falling into ruin around them, brooding over the past. The keeper watched the small procession as it passed his gate on its way to the churchyard in the village. “There he goes, poor fellow, his sufferings over at last,” he said; and then he set the cottage in order and began the old solitary life again.

He saw Miss Ward but once.

It was a breathless evening in August when the moonlight flooded the level country. He had started out to stroll across the waste, but the mood changed, and climbing over the eastern wall he had walked back to the flag-staff, and now lay at its foot gazing up into the infinite sky. A step sounded on the gravel walk; he turned his face that way and recognized Miss Ward. With confident step she passed the dark cottage, and brushed his arm with her



robe as he lay unseen in the shadow. She went down towards the parade-ground, and his eyes followed her. Softly outlined in the moonlight she moved to and fro among the mounds, pausing often, and once he thought she knelt. Then slowly she returned, and he raised himself and waited; she saw him, started, then paused.

“I thought you were away,” she said; “Pomp told me so.”

“You set him to watch me?”

“Yes. I wished to come here once, and I did not wish to meet you.”

“Why did you wish to come?”

“Because Ward was here--and because--because--never mind. It is enough that I wished to walk once among those mounds.”

“And pray there?”

“Well,--and if I did!” said the girl, defiantly.

Rodman stood facing her, with his arms folded; his eyes rested on her face; he said nothing.

“I am going away to-morrow,” began Miss Ward again, assuming with an effort her old, pulseless manner. “I have sold the place, and I shall never return, I think; I am going far away.”

“Where?”

“To Tennessee.”

“That is not so very far,” said the keeper, smiling.

“There I shall begin a new existence,” pursued the voice, ignoring the comment.

“You have scarcely begun the old; you are hardly more than a child, now. What are you going to do in Tennessee?”

“Teach.”

“Have you relatives there?”

“No.”

“A miserable life,--a hard, lonely, loveless life,” said Rodman; “God help the woman who must be that dreary thing, a teacher from necessity.”

Miss Ward turned swiftly, but the keeper kept by her side. He saw the tears glittering on her eyelashes, and his voice softened. “Do not leave me in anger,” he said; “I should not have spoken so, although indeed it was the truth. Walk back with me to the cottage, and take your last look at the room where poor Ward died, and then I will go with you to your home.”

“No; Pomp is waiting at the gate,” said the girl, almost inarticulately.

“Very well; to the gate, then.”



They went towards the cottage in silence; the keeper threw open the door. "Go in," he said. "I will wait outside."

The girl entered and went into the inner room; throwing herself down upon her knees at the bedside, "O Ward, Ward," she sobbed, "I am all alone in the world now, Ward, all alone!" She buried her face in her hands and gave way to a passion of tears; and the keeper could not help but hear as he waited outside. Then the desolate little creature rose and came forth, putting on, as she did so her poor armor of pride. The keeper had not moved from the door-step. Now, he turned his face. "Before you go,--go away forever from this place,--will you write your name in my register," he said, "the visitors' register? The government had it prepared for the throngs who would visit these graves; but with the exception of the blacks, who cannot write, no one has come, and the register is empty. Will you write your name? Yet do not write it unless you can think gently of the men who lie there under the grass; I believe you do think gently of them, else why have you come of your own accord to stand by the side of their graves?" As he said this, he looked fixedly at her.

Miss Ward did not answer; but neither did she write.

"Very well," said the keeper; "come away. You will not, I see."

"I cannot! Shall I, Bettina Ward, set my name down in black and white as a visitor to this cemetery, where lie fourteen thousand of the soldiers who killed my father, my three brothers, my cousins; who brought desolation upon all our house, and ruin upon all our neighborhood, all our State, and all our country?--for the South is our country, and not your icy North. Shall I forget these things? Never! Sooner let my right hand wither by my side! I was but a child; yet I remember the tears of my mother, and the grief of all around us. There was not a house where there was not one dead."

"It is true," answered the keeper; "at the South, all went."

"Grief covers our land."\*\*\*\*

"Yes; for a mighty wrong brings ever in its train a mighty sorrow."

Miss Ward turned upon him fiercely.

"Do you, who have lived among us, dare to pretend that the state of our servants is not worse this moment than it ever was before?"

"Transition."

"A horrible transition!"

"Horrible, but inevitable; education will be the savior. Had I fifty millions to spend on the South to-morrow, every cent should go for schools, and for schools alone."





“For the negroes, I suppose,” said the girl with a bitter scorn.

“For the negroes, and for the whites also,” answered John Rodman gravely. “The lack of general education is painfully apparent everywhere throughout [sic] the South; it is from that cause more than any other that your beautiful country now lies desolate.”

“Desolate,--desolate indeed,” said Miss Ward.

They walked down to the gate together in silence. “Good-by,” said John, holding out his hand; “you will give me yours or not as you choose, but I will not have it as a favor.”

She gave it.

“I hope that life will grow brighter to you as the years pass. May God bless you.”

He dropped her hand; she turned, and passed through the gateway; then, he sprang after her. “Nothing can change you,” he said; “I know it, I have known it all along; you are part of your country, part of the time, part of the bitter hour through which she is passing. Nothing can change you; if it could, you would not be what you are, and I should not-- But you cannot change. Good-by, Bettina, poor little child; good-by. Follow your path out into the world. Yet do not think, dear, that I have not seen--have not understood.”

He bent and kissed her hand; then he was gone, and she went on alone.

A week later the keeper strolled over towards the old house. It was twilight, but the new owner was still at work. He was one of those sandy-haired, energetic Maine men, who, probably on the principle of extremes, were often found through the South, making new homes for themselves in the pleasant land.

“Pulling down the old house, are you?” said the keeper, leaning idly on the gate, which was already flanked by a new fence.

“Yes,” replied the Maine man, pausing; “it was only an old shell, just ready to tumble on our heads. You’re the keeper over yonder, an’t you?” (He already knew everybody within a circle of five miles.)

“Yes. I think I should like those vines if you have no use for them,” said Rodman, pointing to the uprooted greenery that once screened the old piazza.

“Wuth about twenty-five cents, I guess,” said the Maine man, handing them over.

-----

\*When Woolson edited this story for her 1880 collection of Southern tales, she added the following poem as an epigraph:



The long years come and go,  
And the Past,  
The sorrowful, splendid Past,  
With its glory and its woe,  
Seems never to have been.  
----Seems never to have been?  
O somber days and grand,  
How ye crowd back once more,  
Seeing our heroes' graves are green  
By the Potomac and the Cumberland,  
And in the valley of the Shenandoah!

When we remember how they died,--  
In dark ravine and on the mountain-side,  
In leaguered fort and fire-encircled town,  
And where the iron ships went down,--  
How their dear lives were spent  
In the weary hospital-tent,  
In the cockpit's crowded hive,  
----It seems  
Ignoble to be alive!

Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

\*\* This sentence is omitted in the 1880 version.

\*\*\* This word omitted in the 1880 version; the following phrase was changed to "by men almost as thin."

\*\*\*\* This sentence through the sentence beginning "Desolate,-- desolate indeed..." were cut from the 1880 version.

