Sheba Blake Publishing Corp.

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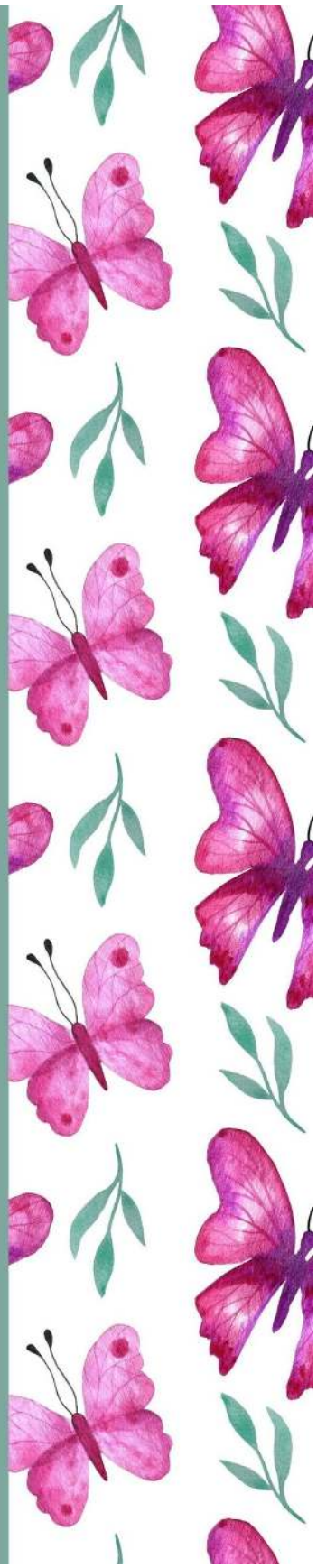

WINSTON CHURCHILL

A Modern Chronicle

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Part One

One

What's In Heredity

Honora Leffingwell is the original name of our heroine. She was born in the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century, at Nice, in France, and she spent the early years of her life in St. Louis, a somewhat conservative old city on the banks of the Mississippi River. Her father was Randolph Leffingwell, and he died in the early flower of his manhood, while filling with a grace that many remember the post of United States Consul at Nice. As a linguist he was a phenomenon, and his photograph in the tortoise-shell frame proves indubitably, to anyone acquainted with the fashions of 1870, that he was a master of that subtlest of all arts, dress. He had gentle blood in his veins, which came from Virginia through Kentucky in a coach and six, and he was the equal in appearance and manners of any duke who lingered beside classic seas.

Honora has often pictured to herself a gay villa set high above the curving shore, the amethyst depths shading into emerald, laced with milk-white foam, the vivid colours of the town, the gay costumes; the excursions, the dinner-parties presided over by the immaculate young consul in three languages, and the guests chosen from the haute noblesse of Europe. Such was the vision in her youthful mind, added to by degrees as she grew into young-ladyhood and

surreptitiously became familiar with the writings of Ouida and the Duchess, and other literature of an educating cosmopolitan nature.

Honora's biography should undoubtedly contain a sketch of Mrs. Randolph Leffingwell. Beauty and dash and a knowledge of how to seat a table. seem to have been the lady's chief characteristics; the only daughter of a carefully dressed and carefully, preserved widower, likewise a linguist,—whose super-refined tastes and the limited straits to which he, the remaining scion of an old Southern family, had been reduced by a gentlemanly contempt for money, led him 'to choose Paris rather than New York as a place of residence. One of the occasional and carefully planned trips to the Riviera proved fatal to the beautiful but reckless Myrtle Allison. She, who might have chosen counts or dukes from the Tagus to the Danube, or even crossed the Channel; took the dashing but impecunious American consul, with a faith in his future that was sublime. Without going over too carefully the upward path which led to the post of their country's representative at the court of St. James, neither had the slightest doubt that Randolph Leffingwell would tread it.

It is needless to dwell upon the chagrin of Honora's maternal grandfather, Howard Allison Esquire, over this turn of affairs, this unexpected bouleversement, as he spoke of it in private to his friends in his Parisian club. For many years he had watched the personal attractions of his daughter grow, and a brougham and certain other delights not to be mentioned had gradually become, in his mind, synonymous with old age. The brougham would have on its panels the Allison crest, and his distinguished (and titled) son-in-law would drop in occasionally at the little apartment on the Boulevard Haussmann. Alas, for visions, for legitimate hopes shattered forever! On the day that Randolph Leffingwell led Miss Allison down the aisle of the English church the vision of

the brougham and the other delights faded. Howard Allison went back to his club.

Three years later, while on an excursion with Sir Nicholas Baker and a merry party on the Italian aide, the horses behind which Mr. and Mrs. Leffingwell were driving with their host ran away, and in the flight managed to precipitate the vehicle, and themselves, down the side of one of the numerous deep valleys of the streams seeking the Mediterranean. Thus, by a singular caprice of destiny Honors was deprived of both her parents at a period which —some chose to believe—was the height of their combined glories. Randolph Leffingwell lived long enough to be taken back to Nice, and to consign his infant daughter and sundry other unsolved problems to his brother Tom.

Brother Tom—or Uncle Tom, as we must call him with Honora—cheerfully accepted the charge. For his legacies in life had been chiefly blessings in disguise. He was paying teller of the Prairie Bank, and the thermometer registered something above 90deg Fahrenheit on the July morning when he stood behind his wicket reading a letter from Howard Allison, Esquire, relative to his niece. Mr. Leffingwell was at this period of his life forty-eight, but the habit he had acquired of assuming responsibilities and burdens seemed to have had the effect of making his age indefinite. He was six feet tall, broad-shouldered, his mustache and hair already turning; his eyebrows were a trifle bushy, and his eyes reminded men of one eternal and highly prized quality—honesty. They were blue grey. Ordinarily they shed a light which sent people away from his window the happier without knowing why; but they had been known, on rare occasions, to flash on dishonesty and fraud like the lightnings of the Lord. Mr. Isham, the president of the bank, coined a phrase about him. He said that Thomas Leffingwell was constitutionally honest.

Although he had not risen above the position of paying teller, Thomas Leffingwell had a unique place in the city of his birth; and the esteem in which he was held by capitalists and clerks proves that character counts for something. On his father's failure and death he had entered the Prairie Bank, at eighteen, and never left it. If he had owned it, he could not have been treated by the customers with more respect. The city, save for a few notable exceptions, like Mr. Isham, called him Mr. Leffingwell, but behind his back often spoke of him as Tom.

On the particular hot morning in question, as he stood in his seersucker coat reading the unquestionably pompous letter of Mr. Allison announcing that his niece was on the high seas, he returned the greetings of his friends with his usual kindness and cheer. In an adjoining compartment a long-legged boy of fourteen was busily stamping letters.

"Peter," said Mr. Leffingwell, "go ask Mr. Isham if I may see him."

It is advisable to remember the boy's name. It was Peter Erwin, and he was a favourite in the bank, where he had been introduced by Mr. Leffingwell himself. He was an orphan and lived with his grandmother, an impoverished old lady with good blood in her veins who boarded in Graham's Row, on Olive Street. Suffice it to add, at this time, that he worshipped Mr. Leffingwell, and that he was back in a twinkling with the information that Mr. Isham was awaiting him.

The president was seated at his desk. In spite of the thermometer he gave no appearance of discomfort in his frock-coat. He had scant, sandy- grey whiskers, a tightly closed and smooth-shaven upper lip, a nose with- a decided ridge, and rather small but penetrating eyes in which the blue pigment had been used sparingly. His habitual mode of speech was both brief and sharp, but people remarked that he modified it a little for Tom Leffingwell.

"Come in, Tom," he said. "Anything the matter?"

"Mr. Isham, I want a week off, to go to New York."

The request, from Tom Leffingwell, took Mr. Isham's breath. One of the bank president's characteristics was an extreme interest in the private affairs of those who came within his zone of influence and especially when these affairs evinced any irregularity.

"Randolph again?" he asked quickly.

Tom walked to the window, and stood looking out into the street. His voice shook as he answered:

"Ten days ago I learned that my brother was dead, Mr. Isham."

The president glanced at the broad back of his teller. Mr. Isham's voice was firm, his face certainly betrayed no feeling, but a flitting gleam of satisfaction might have been seen in his eye.

"Of course, Tom, you may go," he answered.

Thus came to pass an event in the lives of Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary, that journey to New York (their first) of two nights and two days to fetch Honora. We need not dwell upon all that befell them. The first view of the Hudson, the first whiff of the salt air on this unwonted holiday, the sights of this crowded city of wealth,—all were tempered by the thought of the child coming into their lives. They were standing on the pier when the windows were crimson in the early light, and at nine o'clock on that summer's morning the Albania was docked, and the passengers came crowding down the gang-plank. Prosperous tourists, most of them, with servants and stewards carrying bags of English design and checked steamer rugs; and at last a ruddy-faced bonne with streamers and a bundle of ribbons and laces—Honora—Honora, aged eighteen months, gazing at a subjugated world.

"What a beautiful child! exclaimed a woman on the pier."

Was it instinct or premonition that led them to accost the bonne?

"Oui, Leffingwell!" she cried, gazing at them in some perplexity. Three children of various sizes clung to her skirts, and a younger nurse carried a golden-haired little girl of Honora's age. A lady and gentleman followed. The lady was beginning to look matronly, and no second glance was required to perceive that she was a person of opinion and character. Mr. Holt was smaller than his wife, neat in dress and unobtrusive in appearance. In the rich Mrs. Holt, the friend of the Randolph Leffingwells, Aunt Mary was prepared to find a more vapidly fashionable personage, and had schooled herself forthwith.

"You are Mrs. Thomas Leffingwell?" she asked. "Well, I am relieved." The lady's eyes, travelling rapidly over Aunt Mary's sober bonnet and brooch and gown, made it appear that these features in Honora's future guardian gave her the relief in question. "Honora, this is your aunt."

Honora smiled from amidst the laces, and Aunt Mary, only too ready to capitulate, surrendered. She held out her arms. Tears welled up in the Frenchwoman's eyes as she abandoned her charge.

"Pauvre mignonne!" she cried.

But Mrs. Holt rebuked the nurse sharply, in French,—a language with which neither Aunt Mary nor Uncle Tom was familiar. Fortunately, perhaps. Mrs. Holt's remark was to the effect that Honora was going to a sensible home.

"Hortense loves her better than my own children," said that lady.

Honora seemed quite content in the arms of Aunt Mary, who was gazing so earnestly into the child's face that she did not at first hear Mrs. Holt's invitation to take breakfast with them on Madison Avenue, and then she declined politely. While grossing on the steamer, Mrs. Holt had decided quite clearly in her mind just what she was going to say to the child's future guardian, but there was something in Aunt Mary's voice and manner which

made these remarks seem unnecessary—although Mrs. Holt was secretly disappointed not to deliver them.

"It was fortunate that we happened to, be in Nice at the time," she said with the evident feeling that some explanation was due. "I did not know poor Mrs. Randolph Leffingwell very—very intimately, or Mr. Leffingwell. It was such a sudden—such a terrible affair. But Mr. Holt and I were only too glad to do what we could."

"We feel very grateful to you," said Aunt Mary, quietly.

Mrs. Holt looked at her with a still more distinct approval, being tolerably sure that Mrs. Thomas Leffingwell understood. She had cleared her skirts of any possible implication of intimacy with the late Mrs. Randolph, and done so with a master touch.

In the meantime Honora had passed to Uncle Tom. After securing the little trunk, and settling certain matters with Mr. Holt, they said good- by to her late kind protectors, and started off for the nearest street- cars, Honora pulling Uncle Tom's mustache. More than one pedestrian paused to look back at the tall man carrying the beautiful child, bedecked like a young princess, and more than one passenger in the street cars smiled at them both.

Two

Perdita Recalled

Saint Louis, or that part of it which is called by dealers in real estate the choice residence section, grew westward. And Uncle Tom might be said to have been in the vanguard of the movement. In the days before Honora was born he had built his little house on what had been a farm on the Olive Street Road, at the crest of the second ridge from the river. Up this ridge, with clanking traces, toiled the horse-cars that carried Uncle Tom downtown to the bank and Aunt Mary to market.

Fleeing westward, likewise, from the smoke, friends of Uncle Tom's and Aunt Mary's gradually surrounded them—building, as a rule, the high Victorian mansions in favour at that period, which were placed in the centre of commodious yards. For the friends of Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary were for the most part rich, and belonged, as did they, to the older families of the city. Mr. Dwyer's house, with its picture gallery, was across the street.

In the midst of such imposing company the little dwelling which became the home of our heroine sat well back in a plot that might almost be called a garden. In summer its white wooden front was nearly hidden by the quivering leaves of two tall pear trees. On the other side of the brick walk, and near the

iron fence, was an elm and a flower bed that was Uncle Tom's pride and the admiration of the neighbourhood. Honora has but to shut her eyes to see it aflame with tulips at Eastertide. The eastern wall of the house was a mass of Virginia creeper, and beneath that another flower bed, and still another in the back-yard behind the lattice fence covered with cucumber vine. There were, besides, two maples and two apricot trees, relics of the farm, and of blessed memory. Such apricots! Visions of hot summer evenings come back, with Uncle Tom, in his seersucker coat, with his green watering-pot, bending over the beds, and Aunt Mary seated upright in her chair, looking up from her knitting with a loving eye.

Behind the lattice, on these summer evenings, stands the militant figure of that old retainer, Bridget the cook, her stout arms akimbo, ready to engage in vigorous banter should Honora deign to approach.

"Whisht, 'Nora darlint, it's a young lady yell be soon, and the beaux a-comin' 'round!" she would cry, and throw back her head and laugh until the tears were in her eyes.

And the princess, a slim figure in an immaculate linen frock with red ribbons which Aunt Mary had copied from Longstreth's London catalogue, would reply with dignity:

"Bridget, I wish you would try to remember that my name is Honora."

Another spasm of laughter from Bridget.

"Listen to that now!" she would cry to another ancient retainer, Mary Ann, the housemaid, whose kitchen chair was tilted up against the side of the woodshed. "It'll be Miss Honora next, and George Hanbury here to-day with his eye through a knothole in the fence, out of his head for a sight of ye."

George Hanbury was Honora's cousin, and she did not deem his admiration a subject fit for discussion with Bridget.

"Sure," declared Mary Ann, "it's the air of a princess the child has."

That she should be thought a princess did not appear at all remarkable to Honora at twelve years of age. Perdita may have had such dreams. She had been born, she knew, in some wondrous land by the shores of the summer seas, not at all like St. Louis, and friends and relatives had not hesitated to remark in her hearing that she resembled—her father,—that handsome father who surely must have been a prince, whose beforementioned photograph in the tortoise-shell frame was on the bureau in her little room. So far as Randolph Leffingwell was concerned, photography had not been invented for nothing. Other records of him remained which Honora had likewise seen: one end of a rose-covered villa—which Honora thought was a wing of his palace; a coach and four he was driving, and which had chanced to belong to an Englishman, although the photograph gave no evidence of this ownership. Neither Aunt Mary nor Uncle Tom had ever sought—for reasons perhaps obvious—to correct the child's impression of an extraordinary paternity.

Aunt Mary was a Puritan of Southern ancestry, and her father had been a Presbyterian minister, Uncle Tom was a member of the vestry of a church still under Puritan influences. As a consequence for Honora, there were Sunday afternoons—periods when the imaginative faculty, in which she was by no means lacking, was given full play. She would sit by the hour in the swing Uncle Tom had hung for her under the maple near the lattice, while castles rose on distant heights against blue skies. There was her real home, in a balconied chamber that overlooked mile upon mile of rustling forest in the valley; and when the wind blew, the sound of it was like the sea. Honora did not remember the sea, but its music was often in her ears.

She would be aroused from these dreams of greatness by the appearance of old Catherine, her nurse, on the side porch, reminding her that it was time to

wash for supper. No princess could have had a more humble tiring-woman than Catherine.

Honora cannot be unduly blamed. When she reached the "little house under the hill" (as Catherine called the chamber beneath the eaves), she beheld reflected in the mirror an image like a tall, white flower that might indeed have belonged to a princess. Her hair, the colour of burnt sienna, fell evenly to her shoulders; her features even then had regularity and hauteur; her legs, in their black silk stockings, were straight; and the simple white lawn frock made the best of a slender figure. Those frocks of Honora's were a continual source of wonder and sometimes of envy—to Aunt Mary's friends; who returned from the seaside in the autumn, after a week among the fashions in Boston or New York, to find Honora in the latest models, and better dressed than their own children. Aunt Mary made no secret of the methods by which these seeming miracles were performed, and showed Cousin Eleanor Hanbury the fashion plates in the English periodicals. Cousin Eleanor sighed.

"Mary, you are wonderful," she would say. "Honora's clothes are better-looking than those I buy in the East, at such fabulous prices, from Cavendish."

Indeed, no woman was ever farther removed from personal vanity than Aunt Mary. She looked like a little Quakeress. Her silvered hair was parted in the middle and had, in spite of palpable efforts towards tightness and repression, a perceptible ripple in it. Grey was her only concession to colour, and her gowns and bonnets were of a primness which belonged to the past. Repression, or perhaps compression, was her note, for the energy confined within her little body was a thing to have astounded scientists: And Honora grew to womanhood and reflection before she had. guessed or considered that her aunt was possessed of intense emotions which had no outlet. Her features were regular, her shy eye had the clearness of a forest pool. She believed in

predestination, which is to say that she was a fatalist; and while she steadfastly continued to regard this world as a place of sorrow and trials, she concerned herself very little about her participation in a future life. Old Dr. Ewing, the rector of St. Anne's, while conceding that no better or more charitable woman existed, found it so exceedingly difficult to talk to her, on the subject of religion that he had never tried it but once.

Such was Aunt Mary. The true student of human nature should not find it surprising that she spoiled Honora and strove—at what secret expense, care, and self-denial to Uncle Tom and herself, none will ever know—to adorn the child that she might appear creditably among companions whose parents were more fortunate in this world's goods; that she denied herself to educate Honora as these other children were educated. Nor is it astonishing that she should not have understood the highly complex organism of the young lady we have chosen for our heroine, who was shaken, at the age of thirteen, by unfulfilled longings.

Very early in life Honora learned to dread the summer, when one by one the families of her friends departed until the city itself seemed a remote and distant place from what it had been in the spring and winter. The great houses were closed and blinded, and in the evening the servants who had been left behind chattered on the front steps. Honora could not bear the sound of the trains that drifted across the night, and the sight of the trunks piled in the Hanburys' hall, in Wayland Square, always filled her with a sickening longing. Would the day ever come when she, too, would depart for the bright places of the earth? Sometimes, when she looked in the mirror, she was filled with a fierce belief in a destiny to sit in the high seats, to receive homage and dispense bounties, to discourse with great intellects, to know London and Paris and the

marts and centres of the world as her father had. To escape— only to escape from the prison walls of a humdrum existence, and to soar!

Let us, if we can, reconstruct an August day when all (or nearly all) of Honora's small friends were gone eastward to the mountains or the seaside. In "the little house under the hill," the surface of which was a hot slate roof, Honora would awake about seven o'clock to find old Catherine bending over her in a dun-coloured calico dress, with the light fiercely beating against the closed shutters that braved it so unflinchingly throughout the day.

"The birds are before ye, Miss Honora, honey, and your uncle waterin' his roses this half-hour."

Uncle Tom was indeed an early riser. As Honora dressed (Catherine assisting as at a ceremony), she could see him, in his seersucker coat, bending tenderly over his beds; he lived enveloped in a peace which has since struck wonder to Honora's soul. She lingered in her dressing, even in those days, falling into reveries from which Catherine gently and deferentially aroused her; and Uncle Tom would be carving the beefsteak and Aunt Mary pouring the coffee when she finally arrived in the dining room to nibble at one of Bridget's unforgettable rolls or hot biscuits. Uncle Tom had his joke, and at quarter-past eight precisely he would kiss Aunt Mary and walk to the corner to wait for the ambling horse-car that was to take him to the bank. Sometimes Honora went to the corner with him, and he waved her good-by from the platform as he felt in his pocket for the nickel that was to pay his fare.

When Honora returned, Aunt Mary had donned her apron, and was industriously aiding Mary Ann to wash the dishes and maintain the customary high polish on her husband's share of the Leffingwell silver which, standing on the side table, shot hither and thither rays of green light that filtered through the shutters into the darkened room. The child partook of Aunt Mary's pride

in that silver, made for a Kentucky great-grandfather Leffingwell by a famous Philadelphia silversmith three- quarters of a century before. Honora sighed.

"What's the matter, Honora?" asked Aunt Mary, without pausing in her vigorous rubbing.

"The Leffingwells used to be great once upon a time, didn't they, Aunt Mary?"

"Your Uncle Tom," answered Aunt Mary, quietly, "is the greatest man I know, child."

"And my father must have been a great man, too," cried Honora, "to have been a consul and drive coaches."

Aunt Mary was silent. She was not a person who spoke easily on difficult subjects.

"Why don't you ever talk to me about my father, Aunt Mary? Uncle Tom does."

"I didn't know your father, Honora."

"But you have seen him?"

"Yes," said Aunt Mary, dipping her cloth into the whiting; "I saw him at my wedding. But he was very, young."

"What was he like?" Honora demanded. "He was very handsome, wasn't he?"

'Yes, child."

"And he had ambition, didn't he, Aunt Mary?"

Aunt Mary paused. Her eyes were troubled as she looked at Honora, whose head was thrown back.

"What kind of ambition do you mean, Honora?"

"Oh," cried Honora, "to be great and rich and powerful, and to be somebody."

“Who has been putting such things in your head, my dear?”

“No one, Aunt Mary. Only, if I were a man, I shouldn’t rest until I became great.”

Alas, that Aunt Mary, with all her will, should have such limited powers of expression! She resumed her scrubbing of the silver before she spoke.

“To do one’s duty, to accept cheerfully and like a Christian the responsibilities and burdens of life, is the highest form of greatness, my child. Your Uncle Tom has had many things to trouble him; he has always worked for others, and not for himself. And he is respected and loved by all who know him.”

“Yes, I know, Aunt Mary. But—”

“But what, Honora?”

“Then why isn’t he rich, as my father was?”

“Your father wasn’t rich, my dear,” said Aunt Mary, sadly.

“Why, Aunt Mary!” Honora exclaimed, “he lived in a beautiful house, and owned horses. Isn’t that being rich?”

Poor Aunt Mary!

“Honora,” she answered, “there are some things you are too young to understand. But try to remember, my dear, that happiness doesn’t consist in being rich.”

“But I have often heard you say that you wished you were rich, Aunt Mary, and had nice things, and a picture gallery like Mr. Dwyer.”

“I should like to have beautiful pictures, Honora.”

“I don’t like Mr. Dwyer,” declared Honora, abruptly.

“You mustn’t say that, Honora,” was Aunt Mary’s reproof. “Mr. Dwyer is an upright, public-spirited man, and he thinks a great deal of your Uncle Tom.”

“I can’t help it, Aunt Mary,” said Honora. “I think he enjoys being— well, being able to do things for a man like Uncle Tom.”

Neither Aunt Mary nor Honora guessed what a subtle criticism this was of Mr. Dwyer. Aunt Mary was troubled and puzzled; and she began to speculate (not for the first time) why the Lord had given a person with so little imagination a child like Honora to bring up in the straight and narrow path.

“When I go on Sunday afternoons with Uncle Tom to see Mr. Dwyer’s pictures,” Honora persisted, “I always feel that he is so glad to have what other people haven’t or he wouldn’t have any one to show them to.”

Aunt Mary shook her head. Once she had given her loyal friendship, such faults as this became as nothing.

“And when” said Honora, “when Mrs. Dwyer has dinner-parties for celebrated people who come here, why does she invite you in to see the table?”

“Out of kindness, Honora. Mrs. Dwyer knows that I enjoy looking at beautiful things.”

“Why doesn’t she invite you to the dinners?” asked Honora, hotly. “Our family is just as good as Mrs. Dwyer’s.”

The extent of Aunt Mary’s distress was not apparent.

“You are talking nonsense, my child,” she said. “All my friends know that I am not a person who can entertain distinguished people, and that I do not go out, and that I haven’t the money to buy evening dresses. And even if I had,” she added, “I haven’t a pretty neck, so it’s just as well.”

A philosophy distinctly Aunt Mary’s.

Uncle Tom, after he had listened without comment that evening to her account of this conversation, was of the opinion that to take Honora to task for her fancies would be waste of breath; that they would right themselves as she grew up.

"I'm afraid it's inheritance, Tom," said Aunt Mary, at last. "And if so, it ought to be counteracted. We've seen other signs of it. You know Honora has little or no idea of the value of money—or of its ownership."

"She sees little enough of it," Uncle Tom remarked with a smile.

"Tom."

"Well."

"Sometimes I think I've done wrong not to dress her more simply. I'm afraid it's given the child a taste for—for self-adornment."

"I once had a fond belief that all women possessed such a taste," said Uncle Tom, with a quizzical look at his own exception. "To tell you the truth, I never classed it as a fault."

"Then I don't see why you married me," said Aunt Mary—a periodical remark of hers. "But, Tom, I do wish her to appear as well as the other children, and (Aunt Mary actually blushed) the child has good looks."

"Why don't you go as far as old Catherine, and call her a princess?" he asked.

"Do you want me to ruin her utterly?" exclaimed Aunt Mary.

Uncle Tom put his hands on his wife's shoulders and looked down into her face, and smiled again. Although she held herself very straight, the top of her head was very little above the level of his chin.

"It strikes me that you are entitled to some little indulgence in life, Mary," he said.

One of the curious contradictions of Aunt Mary's character was a never dying interest, which held no taint of envy, in the doings of people more fortunate than herself. In the long summer days, after her silver was cleaned and her housekeeping and marketing finished, she read in the book-club periodicals of royal marriages, embassy balls, of great town and country

houses and their owners at home and abroad. And she knew, by means of a correspondence with Cousin Eleanor Hanbury and other intimates, the kind of cottages in which her friends sojourned at the seashore or in the mountains; how many rooms they had, and how many servants, and very often who the servants were; she was likewise informed on the climate, and the ease with which it was possible to obtain fresh vegetables. And to all of this information Uncle Tom would listen, smiling but genuinely interested, while he carved at dinner.

One evening, when Uncle Tom had gone to play piquet with Mr. Isham, who was ill, Honora further surprised her aunt by exclaiming: "How can you talk of things other people have and not want them, Aunt Mary?"

"Why should I desire what I cannot have, my dear? I take such pleasure out of my friends' possessions as I can."

"But you want to go to the seashore, I know you do. I've heard you say so," Honora protested.

"I should like to see the open ocean before I die," admitted Aunt Mary, unexpectedly. "I saw New York harbour once, when we went to meet you. And I know how the salt water smells—which is as much, perhaps, as I have the right to hope for. But I have often thought it would be nice to sit for a whole summer by the sea and listen to the waves dashing upon the beach, like those in the Chase picture in Mr. Dwyer's gallery."

Aunt Mary little guessed the unspeakable rebellion aroused in Honora by this acknowledgment of being fatally circumscribed. Wouldn't Uncle Tom ever be rich?

Aunt Mary shook her head—she saw no prospect of it.

But other men, who were not half so good as Uncle Tom, got rich.

Uncle Tom was not the kind of man who cared for riches. He was content to do his duty in that sphere where God had placed him.

Poor Aunt Mary. Honora never asked her uncle such questions: to do so never occurred to her. At peace with all men, he gave of his best to children, and Honora remained a child. Next to his flowers, walking was Uncle Tom's chief recreation, and from the time she could be guided by the hand she went with him. His very presence had the gift of dispelling longings, even in the young; the gift of compelling delight in simple things. Of a Sunday afternoon, if the heat were not too great, he would take Honora to the wild park that stretches westward of the city, and something of the depth and intensity of his pleasure in the birds, the forest, and the wild flowers would communicate itself to her. She learned all unconsciously (by suggestion, as it were) to take delight in them; a delight that was to last her lifetime, a never failing resource to which she was to turn again and again. In winter, they went to the botanical gardens or the Zoo. Uncle Tom had a passion for animals, and Mr. Isham, who was a director, gave him a pass through the gates. The keepers knew him, and spoke to him with kindly respect. Nay, it seemed to Honora that the very animals knew him, and offered themselves ingratiatingly to be stroked by one whom they recognized as friend. Jaded horses in the street lifted their noses; stray, homeless cats rubbed against his legs, and vagrant dogs looked up at him trustfully with wagging tails.

Yet his goodness, as Emerson would have said, had some edge to it. Honora had seen the light of anger in his blue eye—a divine ray. Once he had chastised her for telling Aunt Mary a lie (she could not have lied to him) and Honora had never forgotten it. The anger of such a man had indeed some element in it of the divine; terrible, not in volume, but in righteous intensity. And when it had passed there was no occasion for future warning. The memory of it lingered.