

"You dear!" I said. That was all, but it was enough for Percivale, who never bothered me, as I have heard of husbands doing, for demonstrations either of gratitude or affection. Such must be of the mole-eyed sort, who can only read large print. So I betook myself to my chamber, and there sat and worked—for I did a good deal of needlework now, although I had never been fond of it as a girl. The constant recurrence of similar motions of the fingers, one stitch just the same as another in countless repetition, varied only by the bother when the thread grew short and would slip out of the eye of the needle, and yet not short enough to be exchanged with still more bother for one too long, had been so wearisome to me in former days, that I spent half my pocket-money in getting the needlework done for me which my mother and sister did for themselves. For this my father praised me, and my mother tried to scold me and couldn't. But now it was all so different! Instead of toiling at plain stitching and hemming and sewing, I seemed to be working a bit of lovely tapestry all the time—so many thoughts and so many pictures went weaving themselves into the work; while every little bit finished appeared so much of the labour of the universe actually done—accomplished, ended: for the first time in my life, I began to feel myself of consequence enough to be taken care of. I remember once laying down the little—what I was working at—but I am growing too communicative and important.

My father used to often say that the commonest things in the world were the loveliest—sky and water and grass and such; now I found that the commonest feelings of humanity—for what feelings could be commoner than those which now made me blessed amongst women?—are those that are fullest of the divine. Surely this looks as if there were a God of the whole earth—as if the world existed in the very foundations of its history and continuance by the immediate thought of a causing thought. For, simply because the life of the world was moving on towards its unseen goal, and I knew it, and had a helpless share in it, I felt as if God was with me. I do not say I always felt like this—far from it; there were times when life itself seemed vanishing in an abyss of nothingness, when all my consciousness consisted in this—that I knew I was *not*, and when I could not believe that I should ever be restored to the well-being of existence. The worst of it was that, in such moods, it seemed as if I had hitherto been deluding myself with rainbow fancies as often as I had been aware of blessedness, as if there was in fact no wine of life apart from its effervescence. But when one day I told Percivale—not while I

was thus oppressed, for then I could not speak, but in a happier moment whose happiness I mistrusted—something of what I felt, he said one thing which has comforted me ever since in such circumstances:

"Don't grumble at the poverty, darling, by which another is made rich."

I confess I did not see all at once what he meant, but I did after thinking over it for a while. And if I have learned any valuable lesson in my life, it is this, that no one's feelings are a measure of eternal facts.

The winter passed slowly away—fog, rain, frost, snow, thaw, succeeding one another in all the seeming disorder of the season. A good many things happened, I believe; but I don't remember any of them. My mother wrote offering me Dora for a companion, but somehow I preferred being without her. One great comfort was good news about Connie, who was getting on famously. But even this moved me so little that I began to think I was turning into a crab, utterly encased in the shell of my own selfishness. The thought made me cry. The fact that I could cry, consoled me, for how could I be heartless so long as I could cry? But then came the thought it was for myself, my own hard-heartedness, I was crying—not certainly for joy that Connie was getting better. "At least, however," I said to myself, "I am not content to be selfish. I am a little troubled that I am not good." And then I tried to look up, and got my needlework, which always did me good by helping me to reflect. It is, I can't help thinking, a great pity that needlework is going so much out of fashion, for it tends more to make a woman—one who thinks, that is—acquainted with herself than all the sermons she is ever likely to hear.

My father came to see me several times, and was all himself to me; but I could not feel quite comfortable with him—I don't in the least know why. I am afraid, much afraid, it indicates something very wrong in me somewhere. But he seemed to understand me; and always, the moment he left me, the tide of confidence began to flow afresh in the ocean that lay about the little island of my troubles. Then I knew he was my own father—something that even my husband could not be, and would not wish to be, to me.

In the month of March my mother came to see me, and that was all pleasure. My father did not always see when I was not able to listen to him, though he was most considerate when he did; but my mother—why, to be with her was like being with one's own—*mother*, I was actually going to write. There is nothing better than that when a woman is in such trouble, except it

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