

any higher station. It seemed to her that to sell cigars over a counter to good looking gentlemen was the highest ambition of life. She gowned herself gaily, and affected pretty, aristocratic airs, speaking often of her grandpappa and grandmamma, as she had heard the girls at school do.

Although not in the least tender hearted, she fancied she felt a vague pity for Jamie, and grew accustomed, after a while, to his ugliness. She found him less repulsive than at first, and extremely useful. Not that there was ever a time, though, that she did not wonder why God should have created any one so disagreeable to the senses.

There came such a happy light to Jamie's eyes that summer, and such odd, joyful songs to his lips, that people used to wonder what that ugly little mortal could have to make him happy. As for him, he never thought about it himself nor realized that anything new and sweet had come into his life. Only sometimes he would say to Miss Jennie—

"I don't think I ever saw sech skies es we hev here, nur sech sunsets, nur sech mountains; an' the wind, somehow, of evenin's, jest seems to say the softest, sweetest things es ever I hear. W'y, jest to hear it come sighin' roun' the garden, a-takin' up all the dandy lines down an' carryin' it away—w'y, it jest makes me wisht that I could write, an' tell the world how beautiful it is."

"Much the world would care, poor, daft fellow," the girl thought, her mind bent upon dollars and cents. She had no understanding nor comprehension of the wonderful things Chuck Olalla saw on every hand, that nature spread out. The down of the dandelion, indeed! What was it? A bunch of nothing that the winds carried away and scattered broadcast over the land.

When she saw him standing at his back door, gazing, entranced, at a moon of cold silver rising out of a bank of orange clouds, she would steal softly into the house, not to disturb him, and whisper to her mother that "Poor Jamie was surely daft."

Summer passed. Autumn, too, came and went, and white winter dwelt in the Cracker creek mining camp. Had he been less simple-minded and less noble-hearted, he would have known that no mortal can be perfectly happy for many months; but he gave no thought to the morrow. One cold day, when the snow was piled high about their doors and almost to the roofs, he thought perhaps Miss Jennie might be out of wood, and he went in to ask if he should get some for her. She was not in the shop, and he passed through to her cozy sitting room, where she always sat, sewing or reading a novel, on cold days.

Jennie came to meet him with glowing color and shy happiness in her eyes, and for one blessed second

the poor fellow's heart almost ceased to beat, in the intoxicating belief that this sweet confusion was all for him. Then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling that made everything hazy to his eyes, he saw some one else—a tall, finely made man, sitting very near the chair which had been occupied by Miss Jennie; and, somehow, all in a moment, the whole miserable truth rushed upon him and crushed him with its dead weight. As in a looking-glass, he saw the days and months which had passed since she first came, sweet and cool and dainty as a mountain flower, into his dingy little shop. And in those days he saw now only one thought, one aim, one feeling—love of her.

What was he that he had dared to so love her, who was as far above him as the snow flower that grew at the top of the mountain was above the blue violet that grew at the base and turned its lowly head upward.

She had been kind to him—O, always! He could not remember a time when she had not greeted him with a smile and a kindly word—but now he saw the difference. The soft flush, the radiant eye, the tender shyness were all for this strong, young giant, who could almost have crushed her in one powerful hand. And he—weak, stunted, as seldom was man created by God—O, kind heaven, he had dared to love her.

"It was th—th—the wood," he faltered, in a broken way. Then, unable to say more, he turned blindly about and shambled, as fast as his uneven limbs could carry him, out of her presence.

"It's only Chuck Olalla, the lame shoemaker, dear," the girl said to her lover, apologetically. "He lives next door, and he is not quite right in his mind—sees things in the skies and hears voices in the winds, and all that sort of things."

Then they forgot him and talked of pleasanter things. And Jamie! Through his dingy shop he went, haltingly, thence into the back room, locking the door behind him. In his eyes was the look that comes into the eyes of a faithful dog that has been struck a cruel and unexpected blow by a beloved hand, and in his soul the deepest suffering that can be borne by man. He stretched himself, face downward, on his hard, unkept bed, and once in awhile an awful sob shook his whole weak frame.

"O, God!" he cried, at last, in the voice of one who writhes beneath some fearful torture, "To think that a man shud be 's I be—ugly an' haltin' an' hidjus, so's no woman 'd keer to look at a secon' time, an'—an'—then to think that I shud be able to keer fer her, jest the same 's other men! Seems 's if I can't bear it, nohow."

After a long, long time he heard her step outside, and her sharp, imperative rap on the door.