

NIGGARD TRUTH



ARRIET came of farmers. The stout race hesitated and hoped in the strong girl; at last, for she never had any children, finished with her. Her mother had followed Whitefield, and Harriet held to the new Protestantism; the men, decidedly retrograde here, were all for Pope Denys. At the time when Harriet first had a real existence, symbolism might have called the grand-dad Silenus, the father Gambrinus, the brother Dionysos. These drank and drank; oftenest in their own complete and scandalous company; but at all times they drank. She said nothing, there being nothing to say. Their cult brought her a new, at times harassing, duty: to see them laid out all three at night in the warm kitchen, their cravats loosened, and the fire safe extinguished. The disgrace of her family added little in the country to her own disgrace of Methodism. Her friends the Methodists found nothing surprising in the unregenerate state of men who had not come under the only possible saving influence. The farm went on, in a fashion, thanks to Harriet. Had she been less active and intelligent than she was, she might have managed it to profit, and her kinsmen might have been her terrible luxury. Her activity never hesitated to carry out what a servant did other than to her liking. Whatever her hands touched was a pattern. Yes; but the servants—especially as she was kind, and often, of necessity, ignorant—pandered to her mania to do her own work herself. The farm, too much for her, had at last to be let to keep up the mortgages.

They had been rich, now they were poor. Harriet had nothing in her hands but work and care. The 'pretty trio' had the management of all else; their management followed its policy unhesitatingly to the logical end. Then the father and the brother died, and were buried. Silenus, missing them, became idiotic and eccentric. He took liquor in sudden aversion as a beverage; but, buying and getting what he could, he bottled and sealed drams which he buried all over the country; and then, like a dog who would know how his hidden bone putrefies, he visited all the nooks strangely, staying out at night even to follow his poor fancy.

Harriet never ceased to work, either for gain and living, or for mere work's

work's sake. Once she had to repair her stays ; she remade them. A neighbour saw, admired, and had her own renewed. Another and another commission, and Harriet was proficient with a definite occupation. She knew not how to mark time. Before long she had discovered an 'improvement' which made her wares famous, which later she sold for a hardly bargained £600. She had her consolation in the great days of the patent, that she had fought hard for a good price, bumpkin girl as she was at the time of the sale.

Old Silenus died at last. Harriet, under contract to refrain from staymaking, was busy as ever with some equally ingenious labour. She never stopped to visit or idle, only going out to attend the offices of her church, or rather 'chapel.' There she was most punctual ; the chapel's life coincided evenly with hers.

The first time the new minister preached, Harriet selected him for a husband. It was Hugh Porter, the young man who came in the face of so many prejudices, being so young, and ugliness not compensating as much as it should. He had once had a kick in the face from a horse, whence a hideous malformation. He preached for an opening with more than passion, with violence. Afterwards, and for many weeks, he was quiet, learned. Harriet watched him carefully ; compared, heard him critically ; at first thought him tactful, executing a plan ; only found out later that it was all accident, that the heaviness of his beginnings was but nervous defiance and waste of ammunition. The sooner he had a calm friend at his elbow the better for him ; and in addition she made a memorandum in her mind—for use in their married life, recognising a radical fault.

They became acquainted. Harriet was very submissive to her 'minister,' without shyness ; in such a way that, in presence of her humility and deference, he forgot his regret that he was not a clergyman. She did not mind his lack of judgment ; he would have many other lessons to learn. She took no umbrage at the rude way in which he set about his 'inquiries' into the conduct of her secluded life ; and he thought himself so wise in this inquisition.

'I never thought I should marry my minister.' The pitch of her voice, the smile, the gravity which made her face look thinner as she said these words, almost gave him a glimpse of the future ; but the marriage took place. It was soon found that he was extremely delicate. And the course of what are called unforeseen circumstances turned strangely from the time of Hugh Porter's marriage. Underhand

hand measures on the part of his deacons threw him out, made him redundant for a time, obliged to preach every Sunday from a different pulpit. Then it was he began to understand Harriet. Then, for the first time in his life, he wrote out his sermons entire, and again and again. Then, to patience and kindness in Harriet, he rehearsed delivery at oration pitch, and noted gesture. Shrewd Harriet! He took her advice, and refused the first offer of a pulpit as second in a circuit, alleging that he had some intention of going into a retreat, like Saint Paul into Arabia. In three months, the fame of his preaching was ringing every week in *The Recorder*. Then a remarkable event, what in business is called a 'deal,' took place between the Wesleyans and the Methodists. A curious notion of Pan-Methodism was abroad, and a minister was exchanged for a great occasion in either body. Hugh Porter was to preach in the great Walworth Road Church in London—to Wesleyans. Harriet was present, in a place where Hugh could not see her. She heard his very low yet distinct preliminary announcement: 'My text will be found. . . .' Right! And then she waited for the opening phrase, almost performing mentally the process of sounding a tuning-fork. Right again! And he kept it up; he showed what was in him. Higher and higher the flood of his oration swelled, and ever the language grew more precise, the argument stricter. Till the last sentences came, sinking masterly to the tone on which he began, and the closing words sounded sweet and distinct as the first. He took the beef-tea she offered him in the vestry in silence. Harriet could not trust herself to speak, for joy.

The Recorder, a well-managed paper, knowing the thoroughness of the Wesleyan organ, came out on Wednesday, not only with the sermon at length, but with a leading article upon it, headed: '*That Man!*' the phrase Hugh Porter had used and repeated with such great effect. This moment began Hugh's life, though he had had a hard boyhood and harder youth. He thought he had known struggling. He found out what struggling means before he had learnt from Harriet where he stood towards his body and towards the world. She had even in her extremity to use for the first time to him the words: 'Take *my* advice.' He had the wit to be wise. He had imagined, when he secured the wealthiest chapel in the Society, that the millennium for him had come; that he had now only to enjoy his income, have a library, go out to tea, embroil himself with all the quarrels of the laity under him, and be master in his own house and out of it.

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The time he gave to his sophistries, otherwise directed, might have made him half independent of Harriet; and than this he desired nothing more dearly. He wanted to love her and direct her. He aimed higher than he ever reached.

As it was, he held himself very quiet; it seemed Harriet did not make mistakes. The jealousies were not long appearing; the mutterings against ministers who interfere; the covert wonderings what he did with his income. It was hard for Hugh. His policy towards the members was not of his own invention; he carried it out mechanically, awkwardly; feared all the time it was right, the only policy. He never refused invitations to preach out of his own circuit, by Harriet's advice. And let him not misunderstand: his sermons were to be staid, even dull, on no account sensational. He did as he was bidden. Reasons for all this? A dozen times he had almost asked: 'And what then?' Well that he checked himself. As it happened, it never came to such a question, but how shocked Harriet would have been! How could she have told him what might be the Lord's inscrutable will?

Once, vague gratitude supplanting perplexity, he was nigh thanking her watchfulness. He put down his awful commentary, and pretended to yawn. Harriet looked up with anxiety. (She was making a pair of stays.)

'Well, my Hugh, what is it?' He sighed a little, and smiled 'My poor Hugh is looking tired.'

'No, Harriet,' he said sententiously, as though giving out a hymn, 'not tired.'

'Shall we talk then?' and with that dawned the most terrible hour Hugh had ever known; hour which set stormily, misty, and blurred with tears. In brief, he must resign, give up his chapel. He was stupid, mouth agog, when he caught the intention of her slow, hard sentences. She was mad; he said so, at last, after repeatedly checking the words on his lips. She gave no heed, made no answer; her calm no whit ruffled. He could not help himself; he thought it seriously. Through the torrents of his objections to each deliberate phrase he followed his thought: the possibility that she was a wild woman; like the mad, gifted with supernatural penetration.

Give up his 'position'? Give up his thirty pounds a quarter?

'Oh, Hugh, Hugh!'

And their little house, so comfortable, with fitted blinds all through;

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to go to some miserable place in the country, perhaps! Useless to talk; he knew this fully ten minutes before he ceased to be coherent. The circuit was too large for him. His early years had been passed in the country: it would do him good if he were sent back to it.

Nothing was said next day. It was a Wednesday; and a committee meeting after the service. Harriet did not wait for Hugh in the chapel as her custom was. She simply told him, as she gave him his comforter, that she had something to do; must go home.

The committee meeting began as usual with a prayer by the eldest of the deacons. This ceremony passed drily. Hugh proceeded at once to run over the accounts; threw the book on the table as he finished. There was the shadow of a pause.

'And now, *gentlemen*,' said Hugh, 'I have something to tell you, something which lies so heavily on my heart that I shall be easier when I have told it: it seems the Lord's will that I should leave this circuit. The circuit is large, my health is far from good, and I do not flatter myself that you will have a great difficulty to fill my place. I hope you will be able to say, gentlemen, that I have been a good minister among you here present as deacons, and among you all as members.' He finished, much moved.

'You are young, sir, to be our minister here . . .' began a younger deacon.

'Think it over a bit, sir,' the *doyen* broke in, roughly. 'I propose a committee meeting this day week, while you think it over, sir.'

'No, my brethren,' said Hugh, more humanly. 'It is thought over already. I did not come here myself; I did not seek to come here. He who sent me hither now sends me hence. If we are allowed to exercise our judgment, minister and members, in coming together, we must recognise His will above it all. I have to ask your permission to resign.'

'Which we all refuse.'

'No, brother, it need not take long; talk it over here and now. You will find me in the chapel when your decision is taken.' He suited his action by leaving the vestry.

They accepted his resignation.

Hugh had a moment of satisfaction as he walked home. This hearty, blunt action of his came at the moment when a long-nursed grumble of his deacons was about finding vent. But his joy was not long-lived.

'I have resigned,' said Hugh. 'The circuit is large, I don't say too large, but they want mere age in their minister, these people.'

For this announcement, he tried his uttermost to speak without expression, to leave Harriet in doubt whether he sulked or not. A touch of her fingers was all Harriet's reply; save that she was very motherly that night, appearing almost in a new aspect.

Hugh was sent to a small west-country village, or rather to two villages, four miles apart. The Porters found a roomy bright house for them, rented by the Society, with a certain quantity of solid furniture in it. They felt quite wealthy when they were installed. The only difficulty was the distances to travel. This was soon felt heavily, for Hugh began to be suffering and more delicate from the first week. He lost his spirits, his appetite; grew restless at night. Harriet kept her head through this trouble; she knew almost all it was necessary for her to know, to guard him and tend him well. But there remained between them want of familiarity. When his ailing was so far confirmed that he could look upon it as a definite and more or less permanent thing, Hugh became nervous on the subject lest Harriet might think he was malingering. She knew this anxiety of his; for once was baffled, not knowing how to reassure him.

Harriet urged her husband to take some pupils, to *amuse* him. Two boys were found, of eight and eleven. After a week Hugh refused to have anything to do with them. Harriet added to her tasks of feeding and grooming, that of training them. These boys turned out wonderfully well. Harriet saw each of them make a fortune in business.

Time came when Hugh left his wife for a whole week, to conduct a 'revival' at Bristol. When he came back, a shed adjoining the house had become a stable; the stable contained a mare. He gave himself over to surprise and delight. It so astonished him that Harriet had found such a smart, useful animal, that he forgot to ask what had been the price of her; and he never knew. The pleasure of his new plaything made Hugh seem his old self for a time. It was a joy to see him grooming the mare, spreading her litter, feeding her. At length, inevitably, came weariness of the work: the trouble of it spoilt the advantage and pleasure of riding; Harriet was forced into suggesting a man to take this duty off Hugh's hands. Henceforth a man was supposed to attend to the mare. Hugh never saw this man, nor did he ever make any inquiry concerning him. One thing remained, for nearly a twelvemonth at least: the distance between village and village

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was no excuse between Hugh and the fulfilment of his duties. Of course, this had to come in the end. It began with obstinacy to go to the neighbouring village on nights so awful that scarce ten souls would be assembled for his ministrations in the chill shed they called a chapel; that, too, at times when his cough was deep, shaking his poor body, so hidden inside the inches of woollens and cloth in which Harriet kept him swathed. Then clear, sheer laziness, variously disguised or perfectly frank. Harriet soon exhausted what few words of persuasion she could afford for such extremities, and passed without pause to acts. The occasion was repeated when Hugh was disinclined to go take his service, away over the heath. No word; Harriet was up to her room and down again in five minutes.

'Hugh, I shall be there before you,' the thin woman's voice piped cheerily, and she was out of the house. A mile and a half of wet road, and Hugh passed her at a trot; she let the hoof-strokes die quite away, then, with unaltered brisk step, turned about towards their home; she had so much to do in the house!

So Hugh grew more and more a child as he aged and shrunk. This in his mere personal manliness, for to the outside he was more and more each year the image of the ideal Harriet had set for him, though all their life she had never so much as said to him: 'I am ambitious for you.' In town or country pupils were always passing through his house to success in the ministry, in business, and professions. He edited *Hugh Bourne*, and had heard of Fox and William Law. He composed test papers for sprouting divinity. Above all, he preached through the length and breadth of England; few preachers of the denomination were more sought. A wretched block, which the enterprising *Recorder* had had cut from a photograph of him, went the round of the Methodist press for years.

The Porters hardly took count of time. Their life together had been so long. The history of the world was narrowed for them into the span of their married life. Years were passing, though they seemed to stand still. Not only was Mrs. Porter grown the thinnest woman imaginable, and her thin voice incredibly thinner, and more quavering almost than a voice can be; but Sophy, Mrs. Porter's cousin, had become Miss Short, and staid at that.

It was at a period when, for the first time, she had the care of six pupils. Harriet dearly wanted a female in her house who was not a servant; some one worthy to receive her tradition, who in case of her death

90 THE DOCTOR—PORTRAIT OF MY BROTHER
an original lithograph
by
James M'Neil Whistler



death could look after Hugh, in all that phrase implied. She had cast about in her memory: her cousin Sophy must be fourteen; she gave days to reflecting on the girl's 'breed' (Harriet believed in breed); felt sure in the end that, accidents apart, she could make something of Sophy. The child turned out, as she became a woman, the very finest bit of mortal clay Harriet had ever had the handling of; so quiet, so intractable; long-suffering, and so savage. Any impression made on such a character lasts. So Harriet thought, and was glad because of Sophy Short. There was always perfect accord between the two, but never, never peace; they were destined to be noble friends one day. Such a pupil for such a mistress!

The two women became a sort of society. They spoke so little except between themselves: they treated Hugh with such equal kindness that they were almost to him as one. Whatever he required done either of them did, with the same readiness, the same silence, the same perfection. He gave up at length distinguishing their names, using them indifferently; they fell in with this arrangement. Hugh thought he had reached beautiful old age. He was very white. Wherever he went the fuss about him was extraordinary, even for so mild and ugly an old gentleman, and so renowned a preacher. The Juggernaut homages he had been accustomed to receive for years (let us say this was the cause) had led him to make a collection of the most sickening clichés, to which he made an occasional addition, about 'getting nearer the light,' and the like, phrases which sounded like tinned Longfellow. Poor old Hugh! But in pulpits he was different. Once above the heads of a thousand listeners, he found old fire to recite old sermons. Harriet seldom heard him; for one reason that he rarely preached in his own circuit, where a grateful Society gave him more assistance than he required. When she did, she was prominent in the chapel, nodded vigorous approval, with more than punctuality, at each full period, constituting herself a silent claque.

'We shall not have Mr. Porter with us much longer,' startled Sophy one quiet morning.

'What do you mean, Auntie?' asked Sophy angrily. 'How can you be so stupid? How do you know?'

'Mark my words, dear, you will see.'

'How do you know?'

'Mark my words.'

It seemed a foolish prediction, for Hugh had never been better

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or livelier to Sophy's knowledge. She drew attention to this next day.

'That is just it,' answered Harriet. 'He is so active.'

There was not a trace in her manner of any feeling other than satisfaction in her prophecy. Sophy was far less contented. After tea, when all three were sitting together, Hugh rose from his chair rather suddenly, and Sophy, on the watch, burst out at him :

'Don't be so active, Uncle, you make me cross.'

Hugh was bewildered, but Harriet laughed :

'Don't mind her, my dear ; she is growing old.'

'Be more careful,' Sophy persisted sullenly ; 'where's your skull-cap?'

Her prophecy came true quickly enough to surprise Harriet herself. The very morning following Hugh was not allowed to get up ; congestion, pneumonia. The crowd at his burial was enormous. The grave-side encomiums were more sincere than grammatical.

'I have only to think now of following him,' said Harriet. A large subscription to support her widowhood was raised in the Society.

Hugh had lain dead a whole week before burial, for certain reasons. Harriet was glad of this. Day after day the weather seemed so bad for Hugh to begin his sojourn under clay. Many a troubling phrase came from Harriet while he still lay upstairs ; phrases the hearers excused, supposing them fruits of her excitement ; troubling not in their sense but in the expression : Hugh among angels the subject, right and pious enough as a notion ; but the thin old woman had a wild way of knowing what she spoke of. Hugh, bright and young and ransomed, in spiritual company. But the companions were not so feathered as sometimes seen, and their locality to Harriet was never vague or very distant. For her they were in the house or the little garden ; or against the corpse in prayer. When they were in the drawing-room, Harriet spoke of them, though not in direct statement as in a definite part of the room ; and talking currently and topically. Sophy and chance women lost patience at last, though they dared not show this. Their materialism was low and timid.

Against this (and the superficial may wonder), the corpse upstairs was still Hugh. When it had been buried it was still Hugh. Thrice, while he waited for burial, his grave costume was changed ; finally he went to rest in a long scarlet flannel robe, a passionate Christian symbol the excuse, that he might be warmer and look more comfortable in the earth, but chiefly that Harriet might *see him better*. Hints she dropped

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of this intention were far too obscure for Sophy to penetrate. None remembered that Silenus lived again in his granddaughter: the old idiot who had intercourse with his dead through the medium of medicine-bottles full of brandy. But Silenus was crazed; fancy broke its bounds in his brain, so that he was obliged, with stiff fingers, to unearth the drams, to see if the dead had drunk, to drink with them.

Harriet was quite ready to take up her life again the very hour Hugh was put in the dust. Sophy allowed the household work to be resumed next day. It passed much as usual, only interrupted by an occasional snivel of Sophy. Harriet loved facts. Sophy waited patiently for the old woman to return to such expressions as she had used during the week her husband lay dead—to criticise them, and admonish her; but she waited in vain. Only during that week had any one heard Harriet speak of the dead and glorified as she had then spoken; both before and since, all her utterances on such subjects were strictly theological, and very scanty. Her care was always for the maintenance or improvement of material surroundings. Here Sophy seconded her with staunch intention. The two women kept up their house as though its inmates were twice as numerous, with as much enthusiasm as though they were on the threshold of life. Indeed, now Hugh was out of the way, there needed no mystery about the turning out and scouring which he loathed. They might wash the chimney-pots every day, and no one would scowl and whimper, and take to bed of *ennui*. Harriet had attained her very ideal of housewifery, only to find it hopelessly flawed by the fact that she could not do all herself. A failing frame fought her ravenous spirit of toil; for hours, literally straightened limbs forced her to idleness, while Sophy never sat down, never halted, the long day through: inventing epic tasks, lifetime tattings and microscopic patchworks, to employ the hours of lamp-light. The only seeming solace Harriet had was that she might command idleness in Sophy; but how could she do that? Indeed, Sophy might refuse to obey her.

However, she took care to set aside, for the time when she was forced to sit down, certain employments to which repose was no barrier. Chief among these was the care of the 'silver,' the electro-plate she possessed. Her malice loved to see as much of the 'silver' used as possible, on all occasions: dishes, covers, forks, spoons, toast-rack, cruets—such wealth of bright metal as Harriet thought well nigh incredible. It was a joy of joys to her to be surrounded with her 'silver';

'silver'; lovingly to clean and polish, and then wrap each object in white tissue-paper, just as they had been received from the shop. 'What beautiful new spoons!' 'New spoons,' she would laugh, 'well, they are not very old; I have had them fifteen years.' With all the things in the house she valued it was the same. A great jealousy lest Sophy should interfere with them for any purpose. It would be time enough for her to touch the precious things when they were her own. There was never any question on the subject; it was so well understood that Sophy inherited all the possessions. And not exactly inherit either; the goods, and that vague wealth in the funds, which she would have at Harriet's death, would come as a life's wages deferred. For this she had toiled, brain and hands, to the full of her powers, for the Porters. For this she had kept herself fast, never suffering a thought of marriage, for example, to loiter in her mind. She knew, latterly, as she grew to know Harriet somewhat, that her legacy would be considerable. She arrived queerly at this knowledge. Harriet made no secret of the 'wage' understanding; she was finically just; and she set a higher value on *thorough* manual work than on most things.

It seemed near, too, now. Sophy waited from day to day to hear Harriet say, as she had said before: 'I shall not be with you long.' She had her angry answer ready, but it was never called for. So quickly as almost to be noticeable from one week to another, Harriet spent less and less of her day on her feet. Less and less too was she able to use her fingers. Her life drifted more every day towards one chair, one which had been her affectation somewhat, ever since Hugh was taken away. Sophy thought she had always a strange look when sitting in it. It was true. Harriet loved, since she must be idle, to be idle in that chair. From it—for it was never moved—the light of the little sitting-room favoured her seeing what passed before her mind when she was reflective. She would pause sometimes in her work of cleaning the 'silver,' and sit with tea-pot and chamois leather quiet in her hands, and a fixed look in her eyes. She still persisted in cleaning the 'silver'; but as she was able to take care of less, less was used.

When Harriet was in this almost cataleptic condition—and at last it was characteristic—all offers of ministrations, and all inquiries from Sophy, were met with thanks and: 'I am just thinking.' Sophy would wait to see if anything would be added. But only a twinkling smile answered her curiosity, or a vague sentence cut short in the middle,
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changed presently to some matter of fact, to the valuables she would leave at her death: 'You had better have all the silver replated, my dear; then it will last for years. And you must have the drawing-room clock cleaned. Don't be afraid to spend money having everything done up. Then it will be as though you were starting for yourself. I shall come back, perhaps, and see what you are doing; but *you won't see me.*' Then such a funny little laugh.

'Don't be so stupid, Auntie. It's nothing to laugh at.'

Auntie thought she had the laugh, all the same. 'Silver' and clocks and money in the funds she left Sophy; *the rest* she took with her, into the grave and out on the other side. Sophy would not see her; Sophy would not see anything but house-linen and spoons. Hugh had never seen anything; question if he saw much now; she saw him.

'Now, Sophy, I want you to do something for me,' said Harriet. 'Address an envelope to the manager of the bank.' Sophy did this. Harriet slipped into the envelope a folded letter. 'I want you to take this to the bank. Give it to one of the clerks and wait for an answer.'

'You will be all right until I come back?' said Sophy; mere courtesy, for Harriet wanted little most hours of the twenty-four. She went out into the scullery where a charwoman was *soiling* the flags, in the language of her irony, at two shillings a day, and sent her off. A cynical precaution; Harriet was practically helpless, and the woman might ransack the house. Then she went upstairs and dressed herself out in all the best she had. She had never felt so 'silly' in her life; one moment excessively serious, as though she were going to take possession of the bank as a symbol of untold fortune; the next, as utterly conscious before the glass, posing her bonnet upon her flattened hair. She had never before worn *all* her best on a weekday. She went off to the bank without saying good-bye; so much did she realise the perfection of her appearance. The letter she carried contained only a blank sheet of paper.

At the slam of the street door, Harriet was alone in the house; alone with the accumulations of her life. She looked slowly round the little sitting-room, resting on each object with the same thought. The square table would be Sophy's, the round one too; the china in the corner cupboard, each piece of china singly. The cupboard itself was a possession. The canary in its cage before the window would be Sophy's, the maidenhair ferns and the variegated houseleek below it. All would be Sophy's, every visible object. Through the wall there,

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in the drawing-room, which she knew so well that the partition wall scarcely existed, the piano (which would have to be tuned), the inlaid sideboard, and the candlesticks and stuffed birds upon it, would be Sophy's. Hugh's presentation Bible would be hers; the rugs, the pictures on the walls, the curtains, the coal-box, the gilt-legged chair, all must be left behind. Sophy would have all. Down below her feet, through the floor, all the crockery on the dresser would be Sophy's. All the brass on the high black mantelshelf, the warming-pan hanging by the dresser, the commoner knives, the old clock, all the pots and crocks would be Sophy's. A mayor's dinner might be cooked in that kitchen. Upstairs, the great bedsteads, the presses full, crammed with linen, would be Sophy's. Whatever happened, Sophy would never want linen. She herself would want one nightdress between her bones and her coffin: they would hide her neck with a napkin, and cover her feet with another; all in the common way. She left no directions on this point. The costume of the dead calls for loving invention. Sophy would not rise to this; she did not know.

All the silver in the cupboard beside her would be Sophy's, all wrapped in tissue-paper and safe inside baize-lined boxes. All would be Sophy's; the hassock under her feet, the chair in which she sat, the clothes she wore, the shawl about her head, her brooch, her mittens, her slippers. All tangible things in the house were nearly Sophy's own now; very nearly. What was all the house, with walls so thin and frail, as earthly substance is, that her poor eyesight was not stopped by them, pierced them like clear water or clear air? The lines of the room threatened to fade altogether at the bold thought. The lines of the window-frame wavered and curved; the horizontal arched, the perpendicular lines curved outwards as they dropped. It was not much she was leaving; perhaps she was not leaving much behind. Something, too, she took away. She had told Sophy where her will was, that there was money invested. There were other secrets she had not told her, which Sophy now would never know. Her limbs stiffened, or were senseless. She had no pain. Only the captivation of her eyes by the shapeless light through the window troubled her. It called to her, drew her eyes with magnetic power. Something rose in her throat; her eyes darkened; and Harriet was gone.

JOHN GRAY.