

PRUDENCE

Miss Army, in declaring that Jonas Fielding was her "Old Man of the Sea," gave rather exaggerated expression to the estimate she had, half-jestingly, made of his man's power. Something about him, awkward and reserved as he seemed, impressed her as worth considering, and in inducing Prudence into the ways of this "esthete," she was not so much as she was, in some fashion, owed him an apology. But Miss Army's mind was, as she knew herself, morbidly analytical. She was given to talking out her opinions and dissecting and elaborating them in her own amusement, in a way that perhaps even Mrs. Boyce would not understand; and she was perpetually commenting to herself on the motive of the most commonplace actions; she declared herself without a creed, yet she was haunted by a sense that a conscience was one of the grandest things pertaining to human nature and that it needed some unseen awful guidance. In the first high-bred face of the girl one saw a critical, self-reproachful faculty; it was in the curve of her lips, the glance of her dark eyes. She had an almost passionate sense of justice, and was perpetually telling herself that her own conduct was a wrong upon her better self; yet nothing in the world pleased her so well as the close association with the world of poetry, pictures, and color in its varied forms which was called "esthete."

The faintest shadow of surprise, that might have deepened into pain, crossed the man's face. He had pictured Prudence in no such way. There seemed in his mind a precedent for anything she might do or say, or even seen to be; but never before had he thought of her fashioned thus, or in such surroundings. It was scarcely so much a revelation to him as it was a curious phase of life newly presented to him, with Prudence—his Prudence—his centre-piece. A strange look gathered in his eye. He was trying to acoustom himself to what jarred upon his earlier remembrance—that made association painful—what tinged his simple faith with a distrust of which he felt afraid. He stood quiet still while she sang, now and then beating time on his chin with one hand; but the music meant little to him. Almost before she had finished, he bent down and half whispered to Miss Army: "Did you ever hear Prudence sing, 'Nearer, my God, to Thee'?" A quiet smile flickered into his eyes—a look of contentment. For a real success as a preacher, every one says. He looks well enough, but he's had pneumonia two winters. He used to be a Methodist, but he's changed his views; he's a Congregationalist now—at least, he's a Congregationalist. I don't think he accepts quite all they do. At one time he was very near being a Unitarian; but anyway he's a real believer, and oh! it's such a pity his lungs are weak! He was sadder than any one in my brother's class at Andover or Yale. Prudence's sweet eyes had light in them, but the effect of her gentle-rapid utterances was to set Mr. Simonson, who was commencing with himself, the figure of Jonas Fielding, quondam Methodist, full of genuine meaning and real life, as opposed to his visionary peasant toiling upward against a redoubtable wind, with his hands and feet, leaning one arm on the back of his chair, his eyes absent resting on Prudence, whose outlines seemed gradually to impress him with more and more of the "flashes come wonderfully with that satin," he said, earnestly. "I wish you would sit for me, Miss Marlett. He was the man's eyes were mere lines between their lashes as he looked at the girl. "The drawing about the chin too is wonderfully fine. He waved a significant thumb. "I could've got Mrs. Boyce and Miss Army to come with you to my studio. I would give much for some impression of you as you look to-night."

As for Prudence herself, she appeared to have no doubt at all about the fitness of her appearance at Mrs. Boyce's conversation in the shining satin, short-waisted and short-skirted, with her hair coiled high in those careless waves which we see in old pictures, wondering at the craft of our grandmothers' handmaidens. She came early, as Mrs. Crane was at Lady Fanny's and "received" with her two friends. She was a little startled by the exquisite beauty of the rooms, for so far she had only seen the house in Cornwall Gardens in dusky moments and dull weather. Mrs. Boyce's house is not too large a one to have pretty rooms, yet there is given an idea of space—doors give way to portieres, width in chierched corners are not overcrowded. The drawing-room is full of comfort as well as beauty. There are tranquil places in it, with deep window-seats, soft carpets, the repose of some good picture or dainty bit of blue. No one is ever wearied in that drawing-room; the colors seem to have gathered there of themselves, a slow procession, as it were—tributes to the harmonies of the house; and whatever of art or decoration there is, is of the best. Prudence seemed thoroughly to fit her surroundings, and Miss Army, whose spirits rose as the rooms filled and aestheticism was heavy on the air, forgot to cry "Pecavi." The girl was utterly lovely in her dainty gown. She had a rich cluster of yellow roses in her belt, soft frills of yellow lace in her neck and sleeves, and long white Swedish gloves. The effect was perfect, and Miss Army, when the first hour of receiving was over, sat down in the embrasure of a window, amused and interested by the sensation the girl was creating. Prudence had her circle of admirers very soon, but she sat and talked very gaily, betraying no special interest in any peculiar features of the scene. The names of certain famous people, painters and scholars and musicians, had awakened a keen though momentary interest in her, but Miss Army could not decide whether the picturesqueness appealed to anything responsive in her, or whether it only amused her—whether she "believed" in the cut of her own lovely gown, or whether she thought she had "dressed up." It was hard, indeed, to tell just what effect this concentrated London world produced on her concentrated Americanism. While Miss Army was puzzling over the subtleties this involved, Prudence glanced at her with a dimpling smile, and Helena observed Barley Simonson approaching them. As this young man has been especially kind to do with my story, I am afraid I must say a few words regarding him. He was a young man born and bred to such expectations that it would be cruel to criticize his indolence and various peculiarities; but he was a young man of the usual occupations of noble youth, and turned for amusement and occupation, to art and poetry, doing most in the former: painting all the pretty women of society in water-colors with a sort of air which people were pleased to call charming. "A Barley Simonson" was already talked about, and Kensington and Bond Street shop windows displayed his "heads," "hills Lord Baltham spoke of in my reply—the artist, you know—Simonson." Mr. Simonson was regarded as an authority where Intensity and Soul were concerned, and his contentment a thing made acceptable, though some, like Miss Army, were inclined to say he needed a check. "If I were to let Barley Simonson crawl about the rug of my sitting-room," this young lady once said, in calm and unobtrusive manner, "I should be as much ashamed of myself as I was of him. It's all very well to have temperance, but Mr. Simonson need not lie on the floor when he reads poetry to me. It was this young man who, with a certain melancholy grace, approached Prudence, and as it were, seemed prepared to pose his lurid intensity against her fresh, unaffected, unthinking nature.

Prudence nodded. "Oh, very," she added, drawing a little quick breath of satisfaction. "But then, I am always well." She laughed, dimpling and coloring like a June rose. She looked utterly lovely, and Mr. Simonson was not too much engrossed by the thought surging, or as he would have said, "pulsating," within him, to observe it. "Health is certainly a blessing," he said, sinking into a chair near Prudence and Miss Army. "I have been very much engaged by the thought of my own country—Somerset—without envying the peasant his vigor—envying that in a subjective way." Prudence's alert brightness was a little clouded, but she listened intently. "I like to see the peasant, holding them like to imagine how he feels, walking up a brown hill—the furze in feathery

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SHERIFF'S SALE. TO be sold at Public Auction on THURSDAY, the 21st day of August, next, in front of the Post Office, in Chatham, between the hours of 12 noon and 5 o'clock, p. m. All the Right, Title, Interest and Share of Robert Russell, in and to all that Place, Parcel or Lot of Lot Number 1018-4, (No. 21) bounded by the River Miramichi, in the Parish of Newcastle, and County of Northumberland, being the 20 Rods of the said River Miramichi, and Northernly by the said Robert Russell, by his late father, James Russell, deceased, and bounded as follows, viz: Easterly, by the 50 Rods of the same Lot No. 21, by 22 Rods, more or less, of the same Lot No. 21, occupied by Agnes Russell; Southernly, or in front, by the said River Miramichi, and Northernly by the rear boundary line of said Lot No. 21, and being all that part of the said Lot No. 21 lately occupied by the said Robert Russell, containing 65 acres, more or less.

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