TESTED.

She had been the belle of Wildhaven since she came from a boarding school in Philadelphia to preside over her father's house with pretty air of control which Mrs. Wells, the annual house-keeper, never resented or counteracted. Her beauty was of the exquisitely delicate type peculiar to American girls of the refined, educated class, the aristocracy of the democratic land. Her eyes were a deep hazel, shaded by long, golden brown lashes, and her features were out as clearly and regularly as a fine cameo. Hands and feet were small and slender, not thin, for her whole figure was gracefully round. But her greatest perfection was a win as fair, soft and spotless as that of a miniature painting.

When the good minister christened her he gave her the far from musical name of Mary Jane, and Mary Jane Trask was certainly her proper cognomen. But she was May from a baby; May in school, May at home, and when at eighteen she came home "for good," with the honors of the seminary embodied in diploma, there were probably not six persons in Wildhaven who knew her name was actually Mary Jane.

She reigned in the village by right of her lovely face, her kind heart, her city accomplishments, and her father's position, for old Dr. Trask was one of the grandees of the place, though his worldly means would probably sound very small if named in dollars and cents in Wall street.

Nobody wondered when Mr. Pendleton, the great city artist, came to Wildhaven for the summer that he requested the doctor to allow him to take Miss May's portrait, to introduce into a scene he was painting of spring.

In his hands the well-worn subject became a marvel of fresh creations, and when he had made his many sketches from nature, he set up a great easel and canvas, by May's permission, in a large, empty room at the doctor's, and began his painting in good earnest. He had brought letters to Dr. Trask from some old city friends, and in Wildhaven the proprieties were not iron fences against friendly intercourse. Young girls were supposed to be sufficiently guarded from insult or misconstruction by their own innate purity and modesty, and when May stood for her picture in the great empty room, nobody's hands were raised in horror because no matron sat beside her. Her dress for these occasions was of thin floating muslin, cut to show her round shoulders and arms, and her waving golden hair fell unbound around her. Upon the dress and in the hair were scattered delicate spring blossoms, and the small hands carried long strings of tender green leaves.

But once dressed and in position, Mark Pendleton desired his fair model to forget that she was sitting for a picture and exerted every charm for this wonderful powers of conversation for this purpose. And May listened and answered, modestly and intelligently, till she would grow interested in her subjects, when her large eyes would dilate with feeling, her cheeks flush to delicate rose tints, and her face radiant in its beauty, till the artist sighed to think how poorly paint and pencil could reproduce the exquisite face he copied.

He was somewhat older than May, this great artist, who had seen European cities and all the natural scenery of note in his own land, who had read and thought so much, and whose pictures commanded such high prices; but his heart was fresh and youthful as a boy's, and his love of beauty an undying source of delight to him.

He had a tall figure and fine face, with large, dark, soul-lit eyes, and May thought him as handsome as he thought her, which is saying a great deal. She felt proud if she could contribute anything to his picture, and would flush with pleasure when he asked her to stay as he worked "to inspire his work," delighting to pour forth her clear sweet soprano in his favorite songs, and see his face kindle to enthusiasm at the sounds.

So they gave scant heed for heart in the long summer days, often forgetting own the picture and each other faces, as they interchanged the deeper store of thought that drew true love in stronger bonds. The worldly-wise man, the pet of the great city, the artist whose name was a well known one throughout the land, gave his heart to the gentle, sweet girl, who thought heaven was open for her, as she knew the gift was hers.

Dr. Trask gave his consent, sighing a little at the prospect of losing his child, and somewhat consoled by the princely gift of the large painting of spring, where May, with flower-laden, out-stretched hands, seemed advancing from the depth of a forest glade to meet him. The wedding day was fixed for October, and Mark Pendleton returned to Philadelphia to prepare a home for his bride. It was August when he left Wildhaven, and May had great piles of sewing to accomplish, but her lover's parting words were:

Don't wait too long, my darling. I want my little wife's face as fair as spring itself when I come to claim her.

Before he had been gone two weeks Wildhaven was thrown into terror-stricken suffering by the breaking out of a contagious fever, that spread with lightning rapidity through the entire village. It was as violent, so fatal, that every one spared actual sickness was thrown from the list of friend or relative.

May forgot her dainty stitching and ruffling, her coming wedding, and even her happiness, in the suffering around her. In the fearful scorching heat of a long August drought she worked over a hot cooking stove, preparing delicacies for the sick, and carried them herself to the sufferers, the scorching sun beating down upon her with dry burning heat. Often she found the nurse of yesterday the invalid of to-day, and would remain night after night tending the worst cases under her father's care, more than once ending her duty by dressing the dearly-loved friend for the grave.

Her father guarded her by preventatives and precautions as far as possible, but he never stopped her.

"She is doing the work of her heavenly father. He will protect her," was his answer to some few friendly remonstrances, and for a long time it seemed as if the maiden bore indeed a charmed life.

The fever had run its course when in September a cool, wet week broke the oppressive heat, and no new cases occurred afterward except one. But that one tore the doctor's heart-strings more than all the rest, for in her room, tossing in delirious agony, May could pitifully for the father she did not recognize, the lover, absent from her, the friends gone from earth forever. Over and over again she lived the painful scenes of the past few weeks, and Mrs Wells her faithful nurse, knew she stood very near the grave for many long days.

May did not know when Mark Pendleton was sent for and admitted to the darkened room for what they feared was a last gaze at his promised wife. She did not know when all the glorious profusion of her golden hair was shorn off, to place blackdoored? upon her bed; she knew nothing for many, many days, till, waking from a long, deep sleep she saw with clear, comprehending eyes her father's face bending over her. She smiled, wondering where she had gone, as she said faintly:

"Father!"

And he softly kissing her eyelids as they closed again, only murmured:

"Thank God I my child is spared to me."

There was a long convalesence, and after May could sit up and be dressed. She wondered where her mirror and hand glass had vanished. Mrs Wells muttered something about Eliza's carelessness, always breaking something;

and her father called her little vanity, with a quivering smile, when she asked for them.

Even when Mark came, as he did several times, Mrs. Wells dressed her, tried on her face cap that covered her poor bald head, and said sick folks weren't expected to prink.

But one day, when she felt nearly well, she stole down to the sitting room alone, and looked full in the mirror over the mantle-piece.

She knew then why she had been so tenderly guarded from the shock of seeing her own face. A border of flannel lace replaced her splendid hair, and a uniform deep pink color was spread like a mask over her whole face. Her eyes were sunken, and a strange, unnatural ugliness seemed to haunt her own beauty. Covering her face, she wept bitter, unavailing tears.

She had been innocently proud of her lovely face, and Mark had loved it. Even in her first grief she thought most of her lover, sobbing his name till, in an answer he bent over her.

May, he said, do you grieve so. It is only your beauty that is gone. The best of you is here, little May.

She looked up, saying:

You had better call me Mary Jane now. It suits my face better.

I want to call you Mrs Pendleton as soon as possible, he replied gaily.

Mark you would not marry such a fright!

Just try me! Why, May, he added gravely you surely do not imagine this change in your face shakes my love. Suppose this fever had come after we were married, do you suppose I should have run away!

You would have been forced to submit then, I suppose, she said, very dolefully. Now you can escape.

Thinks! I am very well content in my present bondage, I assure you.

And he proved the fact by urging an immediate wedding. The doctor smiled when May made some wondering comments, saying: I should be sorry to think Mark loved only your beauty, my daughter.

And the old man indulged in a most unusual chuckle, as it immensely amused by some thought of his own.

But the wedding was once more postponed by Mark himself. His brother in New Orleans died suddenly, and his widow needed some one to look after the property. So the winter glided away, and April opened, when a dispatch announced Mark's nearly return, and preparations for the wedding were hastened in earnest.

The doctor met Mr. Pendleton at the station, and drove him to the house, assuring him that the day they had previously selected for the marriage; then fifteenth, would now meet his engagements exactly.

But this is the evening!

Exactly. I will postpone it if you wish.

No! No indeed! But you must give me a chance to dress.

You have three hours! It is now 5. My friends will assemble at 8. You are my guest.

May was invincible while Mark ate his supper, and he was escorted to the spare room, where his trunk stood open and every comfort was ready for his toilet.

But a tall, slender, white robed figure, with long lace veil, waited, leaning upon Mr. Trask's arm, when the bridegroom was ready, and slowly advanced with him into the drawing room, filled with friends. The solemn words were spoken, the bridesmaids gently lifted the veil, and Mark saw his wife.

His May, fairer than ever, stood before him her delicate beauty perfectly restored. Upon her head, in place of the heavy braids and coils of hair, were tiny clustered ringlets of gold. Like a baby's the pink mask was gone, and the soft complexion was delicately fair and pure.

It was a long time afterward that Dr Trask told his son-in-law:

Of course I knew the disfigurement was only temporary, but I thought it was good test of your affection, and May could not be trusted with any secret that would seem like deceiving you Mark.