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Leslie Dumas Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
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Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato  
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen London Descartes Cervantes Voltaire  
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# **The End of a Coil**

Susan Warner

# Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Susan Warner

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8472-2618-5

[www.tredition.com](http://www.tredition.com)

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THE END OF A COIL.

BY

SUSAN WARNER

AUTHOR OF  
"THE WIDE, WIDE WORLD."

"Well begun is half done."

LONDON:  
JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET

NOTE TO THE READER.

As in the case of "My Desire," the turning facts of this story are fact; even to the most romantic and unlikely detail. In this is found, I hope, my justification for making the hero in one place repeat something very like what was said by the hero of Queechy on a like occasion. I was unwilling to disturb the absolute truth of the story, so far as I had it.

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## THE END OF A COIL.

### CHAPTER I.

#### DOLLY'S ARRIVAL.

The door stands open of a handsome house in Walnut Street — the Walnut Street which belongs to the city of William Penn; and on the threshold stands a lady, with her hand up to her brows, shielding her eyes from the light. She is watching to see what will come out of a carriage just driving up to the curbstone. The carriage stops; there descends first the figure of a handsome, very comfortable-looking gentleman. Mrs. Eberstein's eyes pass over him very cursorily; she has seen him before; and there is hardly a curl on his handsome head which his wife does not know by heart. What comes next? Ah, that is she! — the figure of the expected one; and a little girl of some eleven years is helped carefully out by Mr. Eberstein, and comes up the steps to the waiting and watching lady. A delicate little thing, delicate in frame and feature alike, with a fair, childish face, framed in by loose light brown curls, and a pair of those clear, grave, wise, light hazel eyes which have the power of looking so young and so spiritually old at once. Those eyes are the first thing that Mrs. Eberstein sees, and they fascinate her already. Meanwhile kind arms are opened wide, and take the little one in.

"Come at last, darling! And do you remember your Aunt Hal? and are you half as glad to see her as she is to see you?" So Mrs. Eberstein gives her greeting, while she is drawing the child through the hall and into the parlour; gives it between kisses.

"Why, no," said her husband, who had followed. "Be reasonable, Harry. She cannot be so glad to see you as we are to see her. She has just come from a long stage-coach journey; and she is tired, and she is hungry; and she has left a world she knows, and has come to a world she doesn't know; hey, Dolly? isn't it true? Tell your Aunt Hal to stop asking questions, and give you something to eat."

"I have come to a world I don't know," repeated the little girl by way of answer, turning her serious small face to her questioner,

while Mrs. Eberstein was busily taking off coat and hat and mufflers.

"Yes, that's what I say!" returned Mr. Eberstein. "How do you like the look of it, hey?"

"I wonder who is asking questions now!" said Mrs. Eberstein. "There, darling! now you are at home."

She finished with another kiss; but, nevertheless, I think the feeling that it was a strange world she had come to, was rather prominent in Dolly. She suddenly stooped to a great Maltese cat that was lying on the hearthrug, and I am afraid the eyes were glad of an excuse to get out of sight. She touched the cat's fur tenderly and somewhat diligently.

"She won't hurt you," said her aunt. "That is Mr. Eberstein's pet. Her name is Queen Mab."

"She don't look much like a fairy," was Dolly's comment. Indeed, Queen Mab would outweigh most of her race, and was a magnificent specimen of good feeding.

"You do," thought Mrs. Eberstein. Aloud she asked: "What do you know about fairies?"

"Oh, I know they are only stories. I have read about them."

"Fairy tales, eh?"

"No, not much fairy tales," said Dolly, now rising up from the cat. "I have read about them in 'Midsummer Night's Dream.'"

"'Midsummer Night's Dream,' you midget!" exclaimed Mrs. Eberstein. "Have you read that? And everything else you could lay hands on?"

She took the child in her arms again as she spoke. Dolly gave a quiet assent.

"And they let you do just what you like at home? and read just what you like?"

Dolly smiled slightly at the obviousness of the course of action referred to; but the next minute the smile was quenched in a mist of tears, and she hid her head on Mrs. Eberstein's shoulder. Kisses and

caresses of course followed, not successfully. At last Mr. Eberstein's repeated suggestion that food, in the circumstances, would be very much in place, was acted upon. Supper was served in the next room, which did duty for a dining-room; and the little family gathered round a bountifully spread table. There were only those three; and, naturally, the attention of the two elder was very much concentrated upon the third new member of the party; although Mr. Eberstein was hungry and proved it. The more Mrs. Eberstein studied her new acquisition, however, the more incitement to study she found. .

Dolly was not like most children; one could see that immediately. Faces as pretty, and more pretty, could easily be found; the charm was not in mere flesh and blood, form or colour. Other children's faces are often innocent too, and free from the shadow of life's burdens, as this was. Nevertheless, it is not often, it is very rarely, that one sees the mingling of childish simplicity with that thoughtful, wise, spiritual look into life, which met one in Dolly's serious hazel orbs; not often that sweetness and character speak so early in the lines of the lips; utterly childish in their soft, free mobility, and yet revealing continually a trait of thoughtfulness or of strength, along with the happy play of an unqualified tender disposition. "You are lovely! you are lovely!" was Mrs. Eberstein's inner cry; and she had to guard herself that the thought did not come to too open expression. There was a delicate air of refinement also about the child, quite in keeping with all the rest of her; a neat and noiseless handling of knife and fork, cup and saucer; and while Dolly was evidently hungry as well as her uncle, she took what was given to her in a thoroughly high-bred way; that is, she made neither too much nor too little of it.

Doubtless all the while she was using her power of observation, as Mrs. Eberstein was using hers, though the fact was not obtruded; for Dolly had heart wants quite as urgent as body wants. What she saw was reassuring. With Mr. Eberstein she had already been several hours in company, having travelled with him from New York. She was convinced of his genial kindness and steadfast honesty; all the lines of his handsome face, and every movement of his somewhat ease-loving person, were in harmony with that impression. Mrs. Eberstein was a fit mate for her husband. If Dolly had watched

her a little anxiously at first, on account of her livelier manner, she soon made out to her satisfaction that nothing but kindness, large and bounteous, lodged behind her aunt's face, and gave its character to her aunt's manner. She knew those lively eyes were studying her; she knew just as well that nothing but good would come of the study.

The meal over, Mrs. Eberstein took her niece upstairs to make her acquainted with her new quarters. It was a little room off the hall which had been destined for Dolly, opening out of her aunt's own; and it had been fitted up with careful affection. A small bedstead and dressing-table of walnut wood, a little chest of drawers, a little wardrobe; it was a wonder how so much could have been got in, but there was room for all. And then there were red curtains and carpet, and on the white spread a dainty little eider-down silk quilt; and on the dressing-table and chest of drawers pretty toilet napkins and pincushion. It was a cosy little apartment as ever eleven years old need delight in. Dolly forthwith hung up her hat and coat in the wardrobe; took brush and comb out of her travelling bag, and with somewhat elaborate care made her hair smooth; as smooth, that is, as a loose confusion of curly locks allowed; then signified that she was ready to go downstairs again. If Mrs. Eberstein had expected some remark upon her work, she was disappointed.

In the drawing-room, she drew the child to sit down upon her knee.

"Well, Dolly, what do you think you are going to do in Philadelphia?"

"Go to school — they say."

"Who says so?"

"Father says so, and mother."

"What do you think they want you to go to school for?"

"I suppose that I may become like other people."

Mr. Eberstein burst out into a laugh. His wife's eyes went over to him adjuringly.

"Are you not like other people now, Dolly?"

The child's sweet, thoughtful brown eyes were lifted to hers frankly, as she answered, "I don't know, ma'am."

"Then why do you say that? or why do they say it?"

"I don't know," said Dolly again. "I think they think so."

"I daresay they do," said Mrs. Eberstein; "but if you were mine, I would rather have you unlike other people."

"Why, Aunt Harry?"

"Yes," said Mr. Eberstein; "now you'll have to go on and tell." And Dolly's eyes indeed looked expectant.

"I think I like you best just as you are."

Dolly's face curled all up into a smile at this; brow and eyes and cheeks and lips all spoke her sense of amusement; and stooping forward a little at the same time, she laid a loving kiss upon her aunt's mouth, who was unspeakably delighted with this expression of confidence. But then she repeated gravely —

"I think they want me changed."

"And pray, what are you going to do, with that purpose in view?"

"I don't know. I am going to study, and learn things; a great many things."

"I don't believe you are particularly ignorant for eleven years old."

"Oh, I do not know anything!"

"Can you write a nice hand?"

Dolly's face wrinkled up again with a sense of the comical. She gave an unhesitating affirmative answer.

"And you have read Shakespeare. What else, Dolly?"

"Plutarch."

"Plutarch's Lives?" said Mrs. Eberstein, while her husband again laughed out aloud. "Hush, Edward. Is it 'Plutarch's Lives,' my dear, that you mean? Caesar, and Alexander, and Pompey?"

Dolly nodded. "And all the rest of them. I like them very much."

"But what is your favourite book?"

"That!" said Dolly.

"I have got a whole little bookcase upstairs full of the books I used to read when I was a little girl. We will look into it to-morrow, and see what we can find. 'Plutarch's Lives' is not there."

"Oh, I do not want that," said Dolly, her eyes brightening. "I have read it so much, I know it all."

"Come here," said Mr. Eberstein; "your aunt has had you long enough; come here, Dolly, and talk to me. Tell me which of those old fellows you think was the best fellow?"

"Of 'Plutarch's Lives'?" said Dolly, accepting a position upon Mr. Eberstein's knee now.

"Yes; the men that 'Plutarch's Lives' tell about. Whom do you like best?"

Dolly pondered, and then averred that she liked one for one thing and another for another. There ensued a lively discussion between her and Mr. Eberstein, in the course of which Dolly certainly brought to view some power of discrimination and an unbiassed original judgment; at the same time her manner retained the delicate quiet which characterised all that belonged to her. She held her own over against Mr. Eberstein, but she held it with an exquisite poise of ladylike good breeding; and Mr. Eberstein was charmed with her. The talk lasted until it was broken up by Mrs. Eberstein, who declared Dolly must go to rest.

She went up herself with the child, and attended to her little arrangements; helped her undress; and when Dolly was fairly in bed, stood still looking at the bright little head on the pillow, thinking that the brown eyes were very wide open for the circumstances.

"Are you very tired, darling?" she asked.

"I don't know," said Dolly. "I guess not very."

"Sleepy?"

"No, I am not sleepy yet. I am wide awake."

"Do you ever lie awake, after you have gone to bed?"

"Not often. Sometimes."

"What makes you do it?"

"I don't know. I get thinking sometimes."

"About what can such a midget as you get thinking?"

Dolly's face wrinkled up a little in amusement at this question. "I see a great many things to think about," she answered.

"It's too soon for you to begin that," said Mrs. Eberstein, shaking her head. Then she dropped down on her knees by the bedside, so as to bring her face nearer the child's.

"Dolly, have you said your prayers?" she asked softly.

The brown eyes seemed to lift their lids a little wider at that. "What do you mean, Aunt Harry?" she replied.

"Do you never pray to the Lord Jesus before you go to sleep?"

"I don't do it ever. I don't know anything about it."

The thrill that went over Mrs. Eberstein at this happily the little one did not know. She went on very quietly in manner.

"Don't you know what prayer is?"

"It is what people do in church, isn't it?"

"What is it that people do in church?"

"I do not know," said Dolly. "I never thought about it."

"It is what you do whenever you ask your father or mother for anything. Only that is prayer to your father or mother. This I mean is prayer to God."

"We don't call it prayer, asking them anything," said Dolly.

"No, we do not call it so. But it is really the same thing. We call it prayer, when we speak to God."

"Why should I speak to God, Aunt Harry? I don't know how."

"Why He is our Father in heaven, Dolly. Wouldn't it be a strange thing if children never spoke to their father?"

"But they can't, if they don't know him," said Dolly.

Here followed a strange thing, which no doubt had mighty after-effects. Mrs. Eberstein, who was already pretty well excited over the conversation, at these words broke down, burst into tears, and hid her face in the bedclothes. Dolly looked on in wondering awe, and an instant apprehension that the question here was about something real. Presently she put out her hand and touched caressingly Mrs. Eberstein's hair, moved both by pity and curiosity to put an end to the tears and have the talk begin again. Mrs. Eberstein lifted her face, seized the little hand and kissed it.

"You see, darling," she said, "I want you to be God's own child."

"How can I?"

"If you will trust Jesus and obey Him. All who belong to Him are God's dear children; and He loves them, and the Lord Jesus loves them, and He takes care of them and teaches them, and makes them fit to be with Him and serve Him in glory by and by."

"But I don't know about Jesus," said Dolly again.

"Haven't you got a Bible?"

"No."

"Never read it?"

"No."

"Never went to Sunday School?"

"No, ma'am."

"Little Dolly, I am very glad you came to Philadelphia."

"Why, Aunt Harry?"

"Because I love you so much!" exclaimed Mrs. Eberstein, kissing the child's sweet mouth. "Why, Dolly, Jesus is the best, best friend we have got; nobody loves us so much in the whole world; He gave his life for us. And, then, He is the King of glory. He is everything that is loving, and true, and great, and good; 'the chiefest among ten thousand.'"

"What did He give His life for?" said Dolly, whose eyes were growing more and more intent.

"To save our lives, dear."

"From what?"

"Why, Dolly, you and I, and everybody, have broken God's beautiful law. The punishment for that is death; not merely the death of the body, but everlasting separation from God and His love and His favour; that is death; living death. To save us from that, Jesus died Himself; He paid our debt; He died instead of us."

"Then is He dead?" said Dolly awefully.

"He was dead; but He rose again, and now He lives, King over all. He was God as well as man, so the grave could not hold Him. But He paid our debt, darling."

"You said, death was everlasting separation from God and good," said Dolly very solemnly.

"For us, it would have been."

"But He did not die that way?"

"He could not, for He is the glorious Son of God. He only tasted death for us; that we might not drink the bitter cup to eternity."

"Aunt Harry," said Dolly, "is all that true?"

"Certainly."

"When did He do that?"

"It is almost nineteen hundred years ago. And since then, if any one trusts His word and is willing to be His servant, Jesus loves him, and keeps him, and saves him, and makes him blessed for ever."

"But why did He do that? what made Him?"

"His great love for us."

"Us?" Dolly repeated.

"Yes. You and me, and everybody. He just came to save that which was lost."

"I don't see how He can love me," said Dolly slowly. "Why, I am a stranger to Him, Aunt Harry."

"Ah, you are no stranger! Oh yes, Dolly, He loves you dearly; and He knows all about you."

Dolly considered the matter a little, and also considered her aunt, whose lips were quivering and whose eyes were dropping tears. With a very serious face Dolly considered the matter: and came to a conclusion with promptitude unusual in this one subject of all the world. She half rose up in her bed.

"Then I love Him," she said. "I will love Him, too, Aunt Harry."

"Will you, my darling?"

"But I do not know how to be His servant."

"Jesus will teach you Himself, if you ask Him."

"How will He teach me?"

"He will make you understand His word, and let you know what pleases Him. He says, 'If ye love me, keep My commandments.'"

"His commandments are in the Bible, aren't they?"

"Certainly. You say you have not got a Bible?"

"No."

"Then we will see about that to-morrow, the first thing we do. You shall have a Bible, and that will tell you about His commandments."

"Aunt Harry, I would like Him to know to-night that I love Him."

"Then tell Him so, dear."

"Can I?"

"To be sure you can. Why not?"

"I do not know how."

"Tell Him, Dolly, just as if the Lord Jesus were here present and you could see Him. He is here, only you do not see Him; that is all the difference Tell Him, Dolly, just as you would tell me; only remember that you are speaking to the King. He would like to hear you say that."

"I ought to kneel down when I speak to Him, oughtn't I? People do in church."

"It is proper, when we can, to take a position of respect when we speak to the King; don't you think so?"

Dolly shuffled herself up upon her knees in the bed, not regarding much that Mrs. Eberstein threw a shawl round her shoulders; and waited a minute or two, looking intensely serious and considering. Then laying her hands involuntarily together, but with her eyes open, she spoke.

"O Lord Jesus,— Aunt Harry says you are here though I cannot see you. If you are here, you can see, and you know that I love you; and I will be your servant. I never knew about you before, or I would have done it before. Now I do. Please to teach me, for I do not know anything, that I may do everything that pleases you. I will not do anything that don't please you. Amen."

Dolly waited a moment, then turned and put her arms round her aunt's neck and kissed her. "Thank you!"— she said earnestly; and then lay down and arranged herself to sleep.

Mrs. Eberstein went downstairs and astonished her husband by a burst of hysterical weeping. He made anxious enquiries; and at last received an account of the last half-hour.

"But, oh, Edward, what do you think?" she concluded. "Did you ever hear anything like that in your life? Do you think it can be genuine?"

"Genuine what?" demanded her husband.

"Why, I mean, can it be true religious conversion? This child knows next to nothing; just that Jesus died out of love to her, to save her,— nothing more."

"And she has given her love back. Very logical and reasonable; and ought not to be so uncommon."

"But it is uncommon, Edward. At least, people generally make a longer business of it."

"In which they do not show their wisdom."

"No; but they do it. Edward, can it be that this child is so suddenly a Christian? Will it stand?"

"Only time can show that. But Harry, all the cases, — almost all the cases reported in the New Testament are cases of sudden yielding. Just look at it. John and Andrew took but a couple of hours or so to make up their minds. Nathanael did not apparently take more than two minutes after he saw Christ. Lydia became a Christian at her first hearing the good news; the eunuch made up his mind as quick. Why should not little Dolly? The trouble is caused only by people's obstinate resistance."

"Then you think it may be true work?"

"Of course I think so. This child is not an ordinary child, there is that to be said."

"No," said Mrs. Eberstein thoughtfully. "Is she not peculiar? She is such a child; and yet there is such a wise, deep look in her brown eyes. What pretty eyes they are! There is the oddest mixture of old and young in her I ever saw. She is going to be lovely, Edward!"

"I think she is lovely now."

"Oh yes! but I mean, when she grows up. She will be very lovely, with those spiritual eyes and that loose curly brown hair; if only she can be kept as she is now."

"My dear, she cannot be that!"

"Oh, you know what I mean, Edward. If she can be kept unspoiled; untainted; unsophisticated; with that sort of mixture of wisdom and simplicity which she has now. I wish we need not send her to school."

"We have no choice about that. And the Lord can keep His own. Let us ask Him."

They knelt and did so; with some warm tears on Mrs. Eberstein's part, and great and warm earnestness in them both.

## CHAPTER II.

### CHRISTINA AND HER MOTHER.