

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelntatz
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving
Petalozzi Platon Pückler Michelangelo Knigge Kock Kafka
Sachs Poe Liebermann Kock Korolenko
de Sade Praetorius Mistral Zetkin



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Marm Lisa

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Imprint

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CHAPTER I—EDEN PLACE

Eden Place was a short street running at right angles with Eden Square, a most unattractive and infertile triangle of ground in a most unattractive but respectable quarter of a large city. It was called a square, not so much, probably, because it was triangular in shape, as because it was hardly large enough to be designated as a park. As to its being called 'Eden,' the origin of that qualifying word is enveloped in mystery; but it is likely that the enthusiastic persons who projected it saw visions and dreamed dreams of green benches under umbrageous trees, of a green wire fence, ever green, and of plots of blossoming flowers filling the grateful air with unaccustomed fragrance.

As a matter of fact, the trees had always been stunted and stubby, the plants had never been tended, and all the paint had been worn off the benches by successive groups of working-men out of work. As for the wire fence, it had been much used as a means of ingress and egress by the children of the neighbourhood, who preferred it to any of the gateways, which they considered hopelessly unimaginative and commonplace, offering no resistance to the budding man of valour or woman of ambition.

Eden Place was frequented mostly by the children, who found it an admirable spot to squabble, to fight, and to dig up the hapless earth; and after them, by persons out of suits with fortune. These (generally men) adorned the shabby benches at all times, sleeping, smoking, reading newspapers, or tracing uncertain patterns in the gravel with a stick,—patterns as uncertain and aimless as themselves. There were fewer women, because the unemployed woman of this class has an old-fashioned habit, or instinct, of seeking work by direct assault; the method of the male being rather to sit on a bench and discuss the obstacles, the injustices, and the unendurable

insults heaped by a plutocratic government in the path of the honest son of toil.

The corner house of Eden Place was a little larger than its neighbours in the same row. Its side was flanked by a sand-lot, and a bay window, with four central panes of blue glass, was the most conspicuous feature of its architecture. In the small front yard was a microscopic flower-bed; there were no flowers in it, but the stake that held up a stout plant in the middle was surmounted by a neat wooden sign bearing the inscription, 'No Smoking on these Premises.' The warning seemed superfluous, as no man standing in the garden could have put his pipe in his mouth without grazing either the fence or the house, but the owner of the 'premises' possibly wished to warn the visitor at the very threshold.

All the occupied houses in Eden Place were cheerful and hospitable in their appearance, and were marked by an air of liveliness and good-fellowship. Bed linen hung freely from all the windows, for there was no hard and fast law about making up beds at any special hour, though a remnant of superstition still existed that it was a good thing to make up a bed before you slept in it. There were more women on their respective front steps, and fewer in their respective kitchens, in Eden Place than in almost any other locality in the city. That they lived for the most part in close and friendly relations could be seen from the condition of the fences between the front yards, whose upper rails fairly sagged with the weight of gossip.

One woman, living in the middle of the row, evidently possessed somewhat different views, for she had planted vines on each of her division fences, rented her parlour to a lodger who only slept there, kept all her front curtains drawn, and stayed in the hack of her house. Such retribution as could legally be wreaked upon this offensive and exclusive person was daily administered by her two neighbours, who stood in their doors on either side and conversed across her house and garden with much freedom and exuberance. They had begged the landlord to induce her to take up her abode elsewhere; but as she was the only tenant who paid her rent regularly, he refused to part with her.

Any one passing the 'No Smoking' sign and entering the front door of Mrs. Grubb's house, on the corner, would have turned off

the narrow uncarpeted hall into the principal room, and, if he were an observing person, would have been somewhat puzzled by its appearance. There were seven or eight long benches on one side, yet it had not the slightest resemblance to a schoolroom. The walls were adorned with a variety of interesting objects. There was a chart showing a mammoth human hand, the palm marked with myriads of purple lines. There were two others displaying respectively the interior of the human being in the pink-and-white purity of total abstinence, and the same interior after years of intemperance had done their fatal work; a most valuable chart this last, and one that had quenched the thirst of many a man.

The words 'Poverty Must Go' were wrought in evergreen letters over the bay window, and various texts were printed in red and black and tacked to the wall in prominent places. These were such as -

To be a Flesh-Eater is to be a Shedder of Blood and a Destroyer of God's Innocent Creatures.'

'Now that Man has Begun to Ascend in the Scale of Being, let Woman Reach Down a Strong, Tender Hand and Aid him in his Struggle for Moral and Spiritual Elevation.'

'Let the Pleasure Field be as Large as Possible. Pains and Fears Lessen Growth.'

'I Believe that to Burden, to Bond, to Tax, to Tribute, to Impoverish, to Grind, to Pillage, to Oppress, to Afflict, to Plunder, to Vampire the Life Labouring to Create Wealth is the Unpardonable Sin.'

Over the mantel-shelf was a seaweed picture in a frame of shells, bearing the inscription, 'Unity Hall, Meeting-Place of the Order of Present Perfection.' On a table, waiting to be hung in place, was an impressive sort of map about four feet square. This, like many of the other ornaments in the room, was a trifle puzzling, and seemed at

first, from its plenitude of coloured spots, to be some species of moral propaganda in a state of violent eruption. It proved, however, on closer study, to be an ingenious pictorial representation of the fifty largest cities of the world, with the successful establishment of various regenerating ideas indicated by coloured discs of paper neatly pasted on the surface. The key in the right-hand corner read -

Temperance Blue.

Single Tax Green.

Cremation Orange.

Abolition of War Red.

Vegetarianism Purple.

Hypnotism Yellow.

Dress Reform Black.

Social Purity Blush Rose.

Theosophy Silver.

Religious Liberty Magenta.

Emancipation of } Crushed Strawberry.

Woman }

A small gold star, added to the coloured spot, hovering over the name of a city, was explained, in the lower left-hand corner, as denoting the fact that the Eldorado face-powder was exclusively used there, and that S. Cora Grubb was the sole agent for the Pacific coast.

Joseph's coat faded into insignificance in comparison with the city of Mrs. Grubb's present residence, which appeared to be a perfect hot-bed of world-saving ideas, and was surrounded by such a halo of spots that it would have struck the unregenerate observer as an undesirable place in which to live, unless one wished to be broken daily on the rack of social progress.

This front room was Mrs. Grubb's only parlour. The seven benches were rather in the way and seemingly unnecessary, as the lady attended meetings morning, noon, and night in halls hired for that purpose; but they gave her a feeling of security, as, in case one of her less flourishing societies should be ejected from its hall, or in case she should wake up in the middle of the night and want to hold a meeting of any club when all the halls were closed, the

benches in the parlour would make it possible without a moment's loss of time.

The room connecting with this was the family banquet-hall and kitchen in one, and as Mrs. Grubb's opinions on diet were extremely advanced, it amply served the purpose.

There were three bedrooms upstairs, and the whole establishment was rather untidy in its aspect; but, though it might have been much cleaner, it is only fair to say that it might also have been much dirtier.

The house was deserted. The only sound came from the back yard, and it was the echo of children's voices. It was not at all a merry prattle; it was a steady uproar interrupted by occasional shrieks and yells, a clatter of falling blocks, beatings of a tin pan, a scramble of feet, a tussle, with confusion of blows and thumps, and then generally a temporary lull in the proceedings, evidently brought about by some sort of outside interference. If you had pushed open the wire door, you would have seen two children of four or five years disporting themselves in a sand-heap. One was a boy and one a girl; and though they were not at all alike in feature or complexion, there was an astonishing resemblance between them in size, in figure, in voice, in expression, and, apparently, in disposition.

Sitting on a bench, watching them as a dog watches its master's coat, was a girl of some undeterminable age,—perhaps of ten or twelve years. She wore a shapeless stout gingham garment, her shoes were many sizes too large for her, and the laces were dangling. Her nerveless hands and long arms sprawled in her lap as if they had no volition in them. She sat with her head slightly drooping, her knees apart, and her feet aimlessly turned in. Her lower lip hung a little, but only a little, loosely. She looked neither at earth nor at sky, but straight at the two belligerents, with whose blood-thirsty play she was obliged to interfere at intervals. She held in her lap a doll made of a roll of brown paper, with a waist and a neck indicated by gingham strings. Pieces of ravelled rope were pinned on the head part, but there was no other attempt to assist the imagination. She raised her dull eyes; they seemed to hold in their depths a knowledge of aloofness from the happier world, and their dumb

sorrow pierced your very heart, while it gave you an irresistible sense of aversion. She smiled, but the smile only gave you a new thrill; it was vacant and had no joy in it, rather an uncommunicable grief. As she sat there with her battered doll, she was to the superficial eye repulsive, but to the eye that pierces externals she was almost majestic in her mysterious loneliness and separation.

The steam-whistle of a factory near by blew a long note for twelve o'clock, and she rose from her bench, took the children by the hand, and dragged them, kindly but firmly, up the steps into the kitchen. She laid her doll under a towel, but, with a furtive look at the boy, rolled it in a cloth and tucked it under her skirt at the waist-line. She then washed the children's faces, tied on their calico bibs, and pushed them up to the pine table. While they battered the board and each other with spoons and tin mugs, she went automatically to a closet, took a dish of cold porridge and turned it into three bowls, poured milk over it, spread three thick slices of wheat bread with molasses from a cup, and sat down at the table. After the simple repast was over, she led the still reluctant (constitutionally reluctant) twins up the staircase and put them, shrieking, on a bed; left the room, locking the door behind her in a perfunctory sort of way as if it were an everyday occurrence, crouched down on the rug outside, and, leaning her head back against the wall, took her doll from under her skirt, for this was her playtime, her hour of ease.

Poor little 'Marm Lisa,' as the neighbours called her! She had all the sorrows and cares of maternity with none of its compensating joys.

CHAPTER II – MISTRESS MARY'S GARDEN

"Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?"
"With silver bells and cockle shells,
And little maids all in a row."

Mistress Mary's Garden did grow remarkably well, and it was wonderfully attractive considering the fact that few persons besides herself saw anything but weeds in it.

She did not look in the least a 'contrary' Miss Mary, as she stood on a certain flight of broad wooden steps on a sunny morning; yet she was undoubtedly having her own way and living her own life in spite of remonstrances from bevy of friends, who saw no shadow of reason or common-sense in her sort of gardening. It would have been foolish enough for a young woman with a small living income to cultivate roses or violets or lavender, but this would at least have been poetic, while the arduous tilling of a soil where the only plants were little people 'all in a row' was something beyond credence.

The truth about Mistress Mary lay somewhere in the via media between the criticisms of her sceptical friends and the encomiums of her enthusiastic admirers. In forsaking society temporarily she had no rooted determination to forsake it eternally, and if the incense of love which her neophytes for ever burned at her shrine savoured somewhat of adoration, she disarmed jealousy by frankly avowing her unworthiness and lack of desire to wear the martyr's crown. Her happiness in her chosen vocation made it impossible, she argued, to regard her as a person worthy of canonisation; though the neophytes were always sighing to

'have that little head of hers Painted upon a background of pale gold.'

She had been born with a capacity for helping lame dogs over stiles; accordingly, her pathway, from a very early age, had been bestrewn with stiles, and processions of lame dogs ever limping towards them. Her vocation had called her so imperiously that disobedience was impossible. It is all very well if a certain work asks one in a quiet and courteous manner to come and do it, when one has time and inclination; but it is quite another matter if it coaxes one so insistently that one can do nothing else properly, and so succumbs finally to the persuasive voice. Still, the world must be mothered somehow, and there are plenty of women who lack the time or the strength, the gift or the desire, the love or the patience, to do their share. This gap seems to be filled now and then by some inspired little creature like Mistress Mary, with enough potential maternity to mother an orphan asylum; too busy, too absorbed, too radiantly absent-minded to see a husband in any man, but claiming every child in the universe as her very own. There was never anywhere an urchin so dirty, so ragged, so naughty, that it could not climb into Mistress Mary's lap, and from thence into her heart. The neophytes partook of her zeal in greater or less degree, and, forsaking all probability of lovers (though every one of them was young and pretty), they tied on their white aprons and clave only unto her. Daily intercourse with a couple of hundred little street Arabs furnished a field for the practice of considerable feminine virtue, and in reality the woman's kingdom at the top of the broad wooden steps was a great 'culture engine' of spiritual motherhood.

It certainly was a very merry place, and if its presiding geniuses were engaged in conscious philanthropy, the blighting hallmark was conspicuous by its absence. Peals of laughter rang through the rooms; smiling faces leaned from the upstairs windows, bowing greeting to the ashman, the scissors-grinder, the Italian and Chinese vegetable-vendors, the rag-sack-and-bottle man, and the other familiar figures of the neighbourhood.

It was at the end of a happy, helpful day that Mistress Mary stood in the front door and looked out over her kingdom.

There was a rosy Swedish girl sitting on the floor of a shop window opposite and washing the glass. She had moved the fresh vegetables aside and planted herself in the midst of them. There she sat

among the cabbages and turnips and other sweet things just out of the earth; piles of delicate green lettuce buds, golden carrots bursting into feathery tops, ruddy beets, and pink-checked. It was pretty to see the honest joy of her work and the interest of her parted lips, when, after polishing the glass, it shone as crystal clear as her own eyes. A milkman stopping to look at her (and small wonder that he did) poured nearly a quart of cream on the ground, and two children ran squabbling under the cart to see if they could catch the drippings in their mouths. They were Atlantic and Pacific Simonson with Marm Lisa, as usual, at their heels. She had found her way to this corner twice of late, because things happened there marvellous enough to stir even her heavy mind. There was a certain flight of narrow, rickety steps leading to a rickety shanty, and an adjacent piece of fence with a broad board on top. Flower-pots had once stood there, but they were now lying on the ground below, broken into fragments. Marm Lisa could push the twins up to this vantage-ground, and crawl up after them. Once ensconced, if they had chosen the right time of day, interesting events were sure to be forthcoming. In a large playground within range of vision, there were small children, as many in number as the sands of the seashore. At a given moment, a lovely angel with black hair and a scarlet apron would ring a large bell. Simultaneously, a lovely angel with brown hair and a white apron would fly to the spot, and the children would go through a mysterious process like the swarming of bees around a queen. Slowly, reluctantly, painfully, the swarm settled itself into lines in conformance with some hidden law or principle unknown to Marm Lisa. Then, when comparative order had been evolved from total chaos, the most beautiful angel of all would appear in a window; and the reason she always struck the onlookers as a being of beauty and majesty was partly, perhaps, because her head seemed to rise from a cloud of white (which was in reality only a fichu of white mull), and partly because she always wore a slender fillet of steel to keep back the waves of her fair hair. It had a little point in front, and when the sun shone on its delicate, fine-cut prisms it glittered like a halo. After the appearance of this heavenly apparition the endless lines of little people wended their way into the building, and enchanting strains of music were wafted through the open windows, supplemented sometimes by the inspiring rattle

of drums and the blare of instruments hitherto indissolubly associated with street parades.

Who? Why? Whence? Whither? What for? These were some of the questions that assailed Marm Lisa's mind, but in so incoherent a form that she left them, with all other questions, unanswered. Atlantic and Pacific were curious, too, but other passions held greater sway with them; for when the children disappeared and the music ceased, they called loudly for more, and usually scratched and pinched Marm Lisa as they were lifted down from the fence; not seeing daily how anybody else could be held answerable for the cessation of the entertainment, and scratches and pinches being the only remedial agencies that suggested themselves.

On this particular occasion there were no bells, no music, and no mysterious swarming; but the heavenly apparition sat on the broad steps. Yes, it was she! Blue-grey eyes with darker lashes sweeping the warm ivory of her cheeks, sweet true lips for ever parting in kind words, the white surplice and apron, and the rememberable steel fillet. She had a little child in her lap (she generally had, by the way), and there were other tots clinging fondly to her motherly skirts. Marm Lisa stood at the foot of the steps, a twin glued to each side. She stared at Mistress Mary with open-mouthed wonder not unmingled with admiration.

'That same odd child,' thought Mary. 'I have seen her before, and always with those two little vampires hanging to her skirts. She looks a trifle young to have such constant family cares; perhaps we had better "lend a hand."' "

'Won't you come in?' she asked, with a smile that would have drawn a sane person up the side of a precipice.

Atlantic turned and ran, but the other two stood their ground.

'Won't you come up and see us?' she repeated. 'There are some fishes swimming in a glass house; come and look at them.'

Marm Lisa felt herself dragged up the steps as by invisible chains, and even Pacific did not attempt to resist the irresistible. Atlantic, finding himself deserted by his comrades, gave a yell of baffled rage, and scrambled up the steps after them. But his tears dried instantly at the sight of the room into which they were ushered; as

large as any of the halls in which Aunt Cora spent her days, and how much more beautiful! They roved about, staring at the aquarium, and gazing at the rocking-horse, the piano, the drum, the hanging gardens, with speechless astonishment. Lisa shambled at their heels, looking at nothing very long; and when Rhoda (one of the neophytes), full of sympathy at the appearance of the wild, forlorn, unkempt trio, sat herself down on a sofa and gathered them about a wonderful picture-book, Mistress Mary's keen eyes saw that Lisa's gaze wandered in a few minutes. Presently she crept over the floor towards a table, and, taking a string from it, began to blow it to and fro as it hung from her fingers. Rhoda's glance followed Mary's; but it was only a fleeting one, for the four eyes of the twins were riveted on hers with devouring eagerness, while they waited for her explanation of the pictures. At the end of half an hour, in which the children had said little or nothing, they had contrived to reveal so many sorrowful and startling details of their mental, moral, and physical endowment, that Mistress Mary put on her hat.

'I will go home with them,' she said. 'There is plenty of work here for somebody; I could almost hope that it won't prove ours.'

'It will,' replied Rhoda, with a stifled sigh. 'There is an old Eastern legend about the black camel that comes and lies down before the door of him upon whom Heaven is going to lay her chastening hand. Every time I have seen that awful trio on the fence-top, they were fairly surrounded by black camels in my imagination. Mistress Mary, I am not sure but that, in self-defence, we ought to become a highly specialised SOMETHING. We are now a home, a mother, a nursery, a labour bureau, a divorce court, a registry of appeals, a soup kitchen, an advisory hoard, and a police force. If we take HER, what shall we be?'

'We will see first where she belongs,' smiled Mary. (Nobody could help smiling at Rhoda.) 'Somebody has been neglecting his or her duty. If we can make that somebody realise his delinquencies, all the better, for the responsibility will not be ours. If we cannot, why, the case is clear enough and simple enough in my mind. We certainly do not want "Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin" written over this, of all doors.'

Rhoda's hand went up to an imaginary cap in a gesture of military obedience. 'Very well, my general. I fly to prepare weapons with which to fight Satan. You, of course, will take HER; oh, my dear, I'm almost afraid you oughtn't! I choose the bullet-headed blonde twin who says his name is "Lanty," and reserve for Edith the bursting-with-fat brunette twin who calls herself "Ciffy." Edith's disciplinary powers have been too much vaunted of late; we shall see if Ciffy ruffles her splendid serenity.'

CHAPTER III – A FAMILY POLYGON

Mrs. Grubb's family circle was really not a circle at all; it was rather a polygon—a curious assemblage of distinct personages.

There was no unity in it, no membership one of another. It was four ones, not one four. If some gatherer of statistics had visited the household, he might have described it thus:-

Mrs. S. Cora Grubb, widow, aged forty years.

'Alisa Bennett, feeble-minded, aged ten or twelve years.

'Atlantic and Pacific Simonson, twins, aged four years.'

The man of statistics might seek in vain for some principle of attraction or cohesion between these independent elements; but no one who knew Mrs. Grubb would have been astonished at the sort of family that had gathered itself about her. Queer as it undoubtedly was at this period, it had, at various times, been infinitely queerer. There was a certain memorable month, shortly after her husband's decease, when Mrs. Grubb allowed herself to be considered as a compensated hostess, though the terms 'landlady' and 'boarder' were never uttered in her hearing. She hired a Chinese cook, who slept at home; cleared out, for the use of Lisa and the twins, a small storeroom in which she commonly kept Eldorado face-powder; and herself occupied a sofa in the apartment of a friend of humanity in the next street. These arrangements enabled her to admit an experimenter on hypnotism, a mental healer who had been much abused by the orthodox members of her cult, and was evolving a method of her own, an ostensible delegate to an Occidental Conference of Religions, and a lady agent for a flexible celluloid undershirt. For a few days Mrs. Grubb found the society of these persons very stimulating and agreeable; but before long the hypnotist proved to be an unscrupulous gentleman, who hypnotised the mental healer so that she could not heal, and the Chinese cook so that he could not cook. When, therefore, the delegate departed suddenly in company with the celluloid-underwear lady, explaining by a hurried postal card

that they would 'remit' from Chicago, she evicted the other two boarders, and retired again to private life.

This episode was only one of Mrs. Grubb's many divagations, for she had been a person of advanced ideas from a comparatively early age. It would seem that she must have inherited a certain number of 'views,' because no human being could have amassed, in a quarter of a century, as many as she held at the age of twenty-five. She had then stood up with Mr. Charles Grubb, before a large assembly, in the presence of which they promised to assume and continue the relation of husband and wife so long as it was mutually agreeable. As a matter of fact it had not been mutually agreeable to Mr. Grubb more than six months, but such was the nobility of his character that he never disclosed his disappointment nor claimed any immunity from the responsibilities of the marriage state. Mr. Grubb was a timid, conventional soul, who would have given all the testimony of all the witnesses of his wedding ceremony for the mere presence of a single parson; but he imagined himself in love with Cora Wilkins, and she could neither be wooed nor won by any of the beaten paths that led to other women. He foolishly thought that the number of her convictions would grow less after she became a wife, little suspecting the fertility of her mind, which put forth a new explanation of the universe every day, like a strawberry plant that devotes itself so exclusively to 'runners' that it has little vigour left for producing fruit.

The town in New York where they lived proving to be too small, narrow, and bigoted to hold a developing soul like Mrs. Grubb's, she persuaded her husband to take passage for California, where the climate might be supposed more favourable to the growth of saving ideas. Mr. Grubb would, of course, be obliged to relinquish his business, but people could buy and sell anywhere, she thought, and as for her, she wanted nothing but unlimited space in which to expand.

There was money enough for an economical journey and a month or two of idleness afterwards; and as Mrs. Grubb believed everything in the universe was hers, if she only chose to claim it, the question of finances never greatly troubled her. They sailed for the golden West, then, this ill-assorted couple, accompanied by Mrs.

Grubb's only sister, who had been a wife, was now a widow, and would shortly become a mother. The interesting event occurred much sooner than had been anticipated. The ship became the birth-place of the twins, who had been most unwelcome when they were thought about as one, and entirely offensive when found to be two. The mother did not long survive the shock of her surprise and displeasure, and after naming the babies Atlantic and Pacific, and confiding them distinctly to the care of Mr., not Mrs., Grubb, she died, and was buried at sea, not far from Cape Horn. Mrs. Cora enjoyed at first the dramatic possibilities of her position on the ship, where the baby orphans found more than one kindly, sentimental woman ready to care for them; but there was no permanent place in her philosophy for a pair of twins who entered existence with a concerted shriek, and continued it for ever afterwards, as if their only purpose in life was to keep the lungs well inflated. Her supreme wish was to be freed from the carking cares of the flesh, and thus for ever ready to wing her free spirit in the pure ether of speculation.

You would hardly suppose that the obscure spouse of Mrs. Grubb could wash and dress the twins, prepare their breakfast, go to his work, come home and put them to bed, four or five days out of every seven in the week; but that is what he did, accepting it as one phase of the mysterious human comedy (or was it tragedy?) in which he played his humble part.

Mrs. Grubb was no home spirit, no goddess of the hearth. She graced her family board when no invitation to refresh herself elsewhere had been proffered, and that she generally slept in her own bed is as strong a phrase as can be written on the subject. If she had been born in Paris, at the proper time, she would have been the leader of a salon; separated from that brilliant destiny by years, by race, and by imperious circumstance, she wielded the same sort of sceptre in her own circumscribed but appreciative sphere. No social occasion in Eden Place was complete without Mrs. Grubb. With her (and some light refreshment), a party lacked nothing; without her, even if other conditions were favourable, it seemed a flat, stale, and unprofitable affair. Like Robin Adair,

'She made the ball so fine;
She made th' occasion shine.'

Mrs. Grubb hanging on her front gate, duster in hand (she never conversed quite as well without it, and never did anything else with it), might have been a humble American descendant of Madame de Stael talking on the terrace at Coppet, with the famous sprig of olive in her fingers. She moved among her subjects like a barouche among express wagons, was heard after them as a song after sermons. That she did not fulfil the whole duty of woman did not occur to her fascinated constituents. There was always some duller spirit who could slip in and 'do the dishes,' that Mrs. Grubb might grace a *conversazione* on the steps or at the gate. She was not one of those napkin people who hide their talents, or who immure their lights under superincumbent bushels. Whatever was hers was everybody's, for she dispensed her favours with a liberal hand. She would never have permitted a child to suffer for lack of food or bed, for she was not at heart an unkind woman. You could see that by looking at her vague, soft brown eyes, — eyes that never saw practical duties straight in front of them, — liquid, star-gazing, vision-seeing eyes, that could never be focussed on any near object, such as a twin or a cooking-stove. Individuals never interested her; she cared for nothing but humanity, and humanity writ very large at that, so that once the twins nearly died of scarlatina while Mrs. Grubb was collecting money for the children of the yellow-fever sufferers in the South.

But Providence had an eye for Mr. Grubb's perplexities. It does not and cannot always happen, in a world like this, that vice is assisted to shirk, and virtue aided to do, its duty; but any man as marvellously afflicted as Mr. Grubb is likely to receive not only spiritual consolation, but miraculous aid of some sort. The spectacle of the worthy creature as he gave the reluctant twins their occasional bath, and fed them on food regularly prescribed by Mrs. Grubb, and almost as regularly rejected by them, would have melted the stoniest heart. And who was the angel of deliverance? A little vacant-eyed, half-foolish, almost inarticulate child, whose feeble and