When Alice Gaylord was, by the death of her grandmother, set free from the long servitude of attending upon the invalid, it might have seemed that nothing need hinder the fulfilling of her protracted engagement to Dr. Carroll. The friends of both the young people expressed, in decorous fashion, their satisfaction that old Mrs. Gaylord, ninety and bed-ridden, should at last have been released, and it was entirely well understood that what they meant was to signify their pleasure at the ending of Alice's tedious waiting. Some doubt in regard to the girl's health, however, still clouded the prospect. Long care and confinement had told on her; and when a decent interval had passed after the death, and the wedding did not take place, people began to say that it was such a pity that Alice was not well enough to be married.

Dr. Carroll was thinking of her health as, one gloomy November afternoon, he walked down West Cedar Street to the house where Gaylords had dwelt from the time when West Cedar Street began its decorous existence, and where Alice declared she had herself lived for generations. He glanced up at the narrow strip of sky like dull flannel overhead, around at the dwellings like a row of proper spinsters ranged on either side of the way, and at the Gaylord house itself, a brick and glass epitome of old Boston respectability. He reflected impatiently that of course Alice could be no better until he got her out of an atmosphere so depressing. Then he remembered that he had always liked West Cedar Street, and he began to wonder whether he were not getting so morbid over Alice that some other physician should be called in.

He had long been baffled by being unable to discover anything wrong, beyond the fact that the girl was worn out with the strain of ministering to an imperious and exacting invalid. She was nervously exhausted; and he said to himself for the hundredth time that rest was the only thing needed. A few months would set everything right. The difficulty was that time had thus far not come up to what was expected of it. Carroll was forced to acknowledge that, in spite of tonics and rest, Alice was really not much better, and he had come almost to feel that the real cause of her languor and weakness was involved in teasing mystery.

The prim white door, with its fan-light overhead and the discreetly veiled side-windows fantastically leaded, was opened by Abby, a sort of housekeeper, who had the air of being coeval with the house, if not with Boston itself. George always smiled inwardly at the look with which he was received by this primeval damsel, a look of virginal primness at the idea of allowing in the house a man who was professedly a suitor, and he declared to Alice that he was still, after long experience, a little afraid of Abby's regard. To-day her customary look vanished quickly, to give place to one more vivid

and spontaneous. Abby put up a lean finger, mysteriously enjoining silence, and spoke instantly in a sibilant whisper.

“Will you please come in here, sir, before you go upstairs?” she said.

She waved her thin hand toward the little reception-room, and the doctor, in mild wonderment, obeyed the gesture and entered. Abby closed the door softly, and came toward him with an air of concern.

“I must tell you, sir,” the old servant said in a half voice, “a queer thing’s come.”

“A queer thing’s come,” he repeated, leaning against the mantel. “Come from where?”

“It’s come, sir,” repeated Abby, a certain relish of her mystery seeming to his ear to impart an unctuous flavor to her tone. “It’s just come. Nobody knows where things come from, I guess.”

“Oh, you mean something’s happened?”

“Yes, sir; that’s what I said.”

“But what is it?”

“I don’t know, sir; but it’s queer.”

He looked at her wrinkled old face, where now the mouth was drawn in as if she had pulled up her lips with puckering-strings lest some secret escape. He smiled at her important manner, and, leaning his elbow on the mantel, prepared for the slow process of getting at what the woman really meant. It proved in the event less laborious than usual, and he reflected that the directness with which Abby gave her information was sufficient indication of the seriousness with which she regarded it.

“Miss Alice ain’t right, sir. She does what she don’t know.”

“What do you mean?” he demanded, really startled.

“She wrote a letter to you last night, and then instead of mailing it she cut it all up into teenty tonty pieces, postage stamp and all; and then said she did n’t know who did it.”

Carroll stared at the woman. Whimsies and mysteries were alike so foreign to Alice that his first and natural thought was that Abby had lost her mind.

“It’s true, sir, every word,” Abby insisted, answering his unspoken incredulity. “She did just ’s I say.”

“If she said she did n’t know who did it,” the young man said sharply, “she did n’t know.”

“Of course she did n’t know. That ’s what’s queer.”

“But she could n’t have done it herself.”

“Oh, but I saw her doing it, sir, and I wondered what was the matter with the letter; only I did n’t notice the postage stamp, or I’d have spoken.”

Carroll knew that Abby was as well aware as was he of Alice’s invincible truthfulness, and that he had not to reckon with any unfounded suspicion of deceit. If Alice had said she did not know who destroyed the letter, then it was evident that she had done it unconsciously and in some condition which needed to be inquired into. He leaned back against the mantel, and playing absently with the dangling prisms which hung above a brazen pair of pastoral lovers on the old-fashioned candelabra, he heard Abby’s story in full. Miss Gaylord had said to the servant that she was about to write the letter, and that it must be posted that evening. Going to the parlor after the note, Abby had seen her mistress cut it to pieces. The maid withdrew, supposing that for some reason the note needed rewriting; but on returning some time later, she had been met by the declaration that it was on the table. As it was not there, her mistress had joined in searching for it, but nothing could be found save the fragments in the waste-basket. Miss Gaylord had insisted that she had not cut it, and that she was entirely ignorant of how the damage had occurred.

Dr. Carroll was puzzled and troubled, nor was he less so when Alice had given him her account. She did this unsolicited, and with evident frankness.

“I suppose, George,” she said, “it’s absent-mindedness; but if I have got so far that I don’t know what I’m doing, I’d better be shut up for a lunatic at once.”

“Has anything of the sort ever happened before?” he asked.

“I am not sure,” was her answer; “but sometimes I’ve found things done that I could not remember doing: my clothes put in queer places, and that sort of thing, you know. I never really thought much about it before. You don’t think—”

He could see that she was seriously troubled, and he set himself to dissipate her concern.

“I think you are tired, and so you may be a little absent-minded; but I certainly do not think it’s worth making any fuss about. You and Abby will have a theory of demoniacal possession soon, to account for a mere slip of memory.”

He did not leave her until it seemed to him that she no longer regarded the incident seriously; but in his own mind he was by no means at ease. At the earliest moment possible he went to consult with a fellow physician who was a specialist in disorders of the nerves, and to him he told the whole case as accurately as he was able. The specialist put some questions and in the end asked:—

“Has she ever been hypnotized?”

“I’m sure she never has,” Carroll answered. “She might easily be a subject, I should think. She’s naturally nervous, and just now she is run down and unstrung.”

“It seems like a case of self-hypnotism,” the other said. “Sometimes, you know, patients unconsciously hypnotize themselves, or get hypnotized, without having any idea of it.”

“But would n’t she know it afterward?”

“Oh, no; the second personality generally knows all about the first—”

“You mean,” interrupted Carroll, “that the normal person is the first and the hypnotized is the second?”

“Yes. The personality that comes to the surface in hypnotism, the subliminal self, knows all about the normal person, but the normal person has no idea of the existence of the secondary, the subliminal personality.”

“It’s so cheerful to think of yourself as a sort of nest of boxes,” Carroll commented grimly, “one personality inside of the other, and you only knowing about the outside box.”

“Or you being only the outside box, perhaps,” the specialist responded, with a smile. “Well, what we don’t know would fill rather a good-sized book.”

The suggestion of hypnotism remained in Carroll’s mind, and it was not many days before he had a sufficiently plain but altogether disagreeable confirmation of the specialist’s theory. He was with Alice in the old drawing-room, a place of quaint primness, with fine, staid Copley portraits, and an air of self-respecting propriety utterly at variance with psychical mysteries. He stood gazing out of the window, while Alice moved about the room looking for a book of which they had been speaking, and his eye was caught by a sparkling point of light on the sunlit wall of the house opposite. He made some casual remark in regard to it, and Alice came to look over his shoulder.

“What is it?” she asked.

“It must be a grain of sand in the mortar, I suppose,” he answered. “It is making a tremendous effect for such a little thing.”

She did not answer for an instant. Then she burst into a laugh which to him sounded strange and unpleasant, and clapped her hands.

“Well, I’ve come,” she said joyously.

He wheeled quickly toward her. Her face seemed to have undergone a change, slight yet extraordinary. She was laughing with a glee that was not without a suspicion of malice, and she met his look with a boldness so different from the usual regard of Alice as to seem almost brazen. He could see that his evident bewilderment amused her greatly. A mischievous twinkle lighted her glance.

“Oh, of course you think I’m she; but I’m not. I’m a good deal nicer. She’s a tiresome old thing, anyway. You’d like me a great deal better.”

Carroll was entirely too confused to speak, but he was a physician, and could not help reflecting instantly upon the cause of this strange metamorphosis. He naturally thought of hypnotism, and he came in a second thought to realize that Alice had with amazing rapidity been sent into a hypnotic condition by looking for an instant at the glittering point on the wall of the house across the street. What the result might be, or what the words she spoke meant, he could not even conjecture.

“Don’t stare at me so,” the girl went on. “I’m Jenny.”

“Oh,” he repeated confusedly, “you’re Jenny?”

“Yes; I’m Jenny, and I’m worth six of that silly Alice you’re engaged to.”

He took her lightly by the shoulders and looked at her, quite as much for the sake of steadying his own nerves as from any expectation of learning anything by examination. Her eyes shone with an unwonted brightness, and seemed to him to gleam with an archness of which Alice would not have been capable. The cheeks were flushed, not feverishly, but healthily, and the girl had lost completely the appearance of exhaustion which had troubled him so long. The head was carried with a new erectness, and as he regarded her she tossed it saucily.

“You may look at me as much as you like,” she said gayly. “I can stand it. Don’t you think I am better looking than she is?”

He was convinced that Alice could not know what she was saying, yet he involuntarily

cried out:—

“Don’t, Alice! I don’t like it!”

She pouted her lips, lips which to his excited fancy seemed to have grown redder and fuller than he had ever seen them, and she made a droll little grimace.

“I’m not Alice, I tell you. Kiss me.”

In all their long engagement Alice had never asked him for a caress, and the request hurt him now as something unwomanly. Instead of complying, he dropped his hands and turned away. She laughed shrilly.

“Oh, you won’t kiss me? I thought it was polite to do what a lady asked! Well, if you won’t now, you will some time. You’ll want to when you know me better.”

She moved away, but he caught her by the arm.

“Stop!” he ordered her, with all the determination he could put into the word. “Wake up, Alice! Be done with this fooling!”

The bright face grew anxious and the pouting lips beseeching.

“Don’t send me away! I’ll be good! Don’t make her come back!”

“Alice,” he repeated, clasping her arm firmly, “wake up!”

“You hurt me!” she cried half whiningly. “You hurt me! I’ll go.”

The wild brightness faded from the eyes, a change too subtle to be defined seemed to come over the whole figure, the old tired expression spread like mist over the face, and the familiar Alice stood there, passing her hand over her eyes.

“What is the matter?” she asked, in a startled way. “Did I faint?”

He was conscious that his look must have alarmed her, and he made a desperate effort to speak easily and naturally.

“I guess you came mighty near it,” he answered, as naturally as he could. “It’s all right now.”

For some days nothing unusual happened, so far as Carroll knew. He watched Alice closely, and he plunged into all the literature on the subject of hypnotism upon which he could lay hands. He was not sure that at the end of a week’s hard reading he was

much clearer than at the beginning, although he had at least accumulated a fine assortment of terms in the nomenclature of animal magnetism. He cautiously questioned Abby, and learned that for some time Alice had been subject to what the old servant called “notional spells when she were n’t herself.” His friend the specialist was greatly interested in all that Dr. Carroll could tell him about the case.

“It is evidently a subliminal self coming to the surface,” he pronounced. “I’ve seen cases somewhat similar, but only one where the patient was not hypnotized by somebody else.”

“But what can I do about it?” George demanded. “I don’t want any subliminal selves floating about. I want the girl I know.”

“Build up her general health,” the other advised. “You say she’s run down and used up with taking care of her grandmother. Get her rested. That’s the only thing I can say. She is n’t really ill, is she?”

“God knows what you call it,” was Carroll’s response. “She can’t be called well when she goes off the way she did the other day. I tell you it was frightful, simply frightful!”

The days went on, and once more George had the uncanny experience of a chat with Jenny. Alice had been looking over some of her grandmother’s belongings, and when he called, came down to him with a necklace of rhinestones dangling and sliding through her fingers.

“See,” she accosted him, in the buoyant manner he remembered only too vividly, “is n’t this gay? I should wear it, only I’m in her clothes, and she won’t wear anything but poky black.”

Carroll tried to steady his nerves against the sudden shock.

“Of course you wear black, Alice,” he said; “it is only six months since your grandmother died.”

She made him a merry, mocking grimace.

“Now don’t pretend you don’t know I’m Jenny,” she retorted. “I saw you knew me the minute you heard me speak. Alice! Pooh! She’d have come into the room this way.”

She darted to the door and turned back, to advance with her face pulled down and her eyelids dropped.

“How do you do, dear?” she greeted him, with a burlesque of Alice’s manner so droll that he laughed in spite of himself.

Jenny herself burst into a shout of merriment and whirled about in a pirouette, swinging the sparkling chain around her head.

“Is n’t it fun?” she exclaimed, pausing before him with her head on one side; “she can’t even look at a bright thing half a minute but off she goes, and here I am. Before I go this time, I’m going to stick up every shiny thing I can find where she’ll see it.”

Carroll had a sickening sensation, as if the girl he loved had gone mad before his very eyes; yet so completely did she appear like a stranger that the feeling faded as soon as it arose. This was certainly no Alice that he knew. He could not speak to her as his friend and betrothed, although it was equally impossible to address her as a stranger. He was too completely baffled and confused to be able to determine on any line of action, and she stood smiling at him as if she were entirely conscious of what was passing in his troubled brain.

“Did you know I cut up her letter?” Jenny demanded, with a smile apparently called up by the remembrance.

“Yes,” he answered, exactly as if the question had been put by a third person.

“It was an awfully foolish letter,” the girl went on. “I won’t have her writing like that to you. You’ve got to belong to me.”

He had neither the time nor the coolness to realize his emotions, but he accepted for the moment the assumption of the individuality of Jenny.

“You are nothing to me,” he said. “I am engaged to Alice.”

“Oh, that’s all right. I know that. I know all about her; lots more than you do. But I tell you, you’d a great deal better take me. I’m just as much the girl you’re engaged to as she is.”

He looked at her darkly and with trouble in his eyes.

“Where is Alice?” he asked.

“Oh, she’s all right. She’s somewhere. Asleep, I think likely. I don’t want to talk about her. I never liked her.”

“Talk about yourself, then. Where are you when Alice is here?”

“Oh, that’s stupid. I’d rather talk about what we’ll do when we are married. Shall we go abroad right off?”

“It will be time enough to talk about that when there’s any prospect of our being married.”

“You would n’t kiss me the other day,” Jenny said, looping the necklace about his throat and bending forward so that her face was close to his.

A feeling of anger so strong that it was almost brutal came over him. He tore the necklace out of her hands and threw it across the room. Then, as on the previous occasion, he caught the girl by the wrists.

“Go away!” he commanded. “Let Alice come back!”

“Oh, you hurt me!” she cried. “I can’t bear to be hurt! Let me go!”

He tightened his grasp.

“If you don’t go, I’ll really hurt. I won’t have you fooling with Alice like this.”

Her glance wavered on his; then the eyelids drooped; and he loosened his hold with the consciousness that Alice had come back.

“Why, George,” she said, in her natural voice; “I did n’t know you were here.”

He took her in his arms with a feeling as near to the hysterical as he was capable of, and then instantly devoted himself to dissipating the anxiety which his obvious agitation aroused in her.

As time went on, the appearances of Jenny became more frequent. The fact that this secondary personality had once been in control of the body which it shared with Alice seemed to make its reappearance more easy. Alice evidently became more susceptible to whatever conditions produced this strange possession. It was clear to Carroll that each time the elfish Jenny succeeded in gaining possession of consciousness,—for so he put it to himself, entirely realizing what a confusing paradox the phrase implied,—she became stronger and better able to assert herself. He grew more and more disturbed, but he was also more and more completely baffled. Sometimes the matter presented itself to his professional mind as a medical case of absorbing interest; sometimes it appealed to him as a freak of gigantic irony on the part of fate; and yet again he was swept away by love or by passionate pity and sorrow for Alice. He felt that, all unconscious of her peril,—for she knew nothing of her mysterious double,—she was being robbed of her very personality.

Most curious of all was his feeling toward Jenny, who had come in his mind to represent an individual as tangible, as human, and as self-existent as Alice herself. He

never allowed himself to encourage her presence, despite the fact that natural curiosity and professional interest might well make him eager to study her peculiarities. He insisted always upon her speedy departure from the body into which she had intruded herself—or so he doggedly insisted with himself—like an evil spirit. He had soon learned that her fear of physical pain was excessive; that, like the child that she often seemed, she could be managed best by dread of punishment; and he for a considerable time had been able to frighten her away by threats of hurting her. As the days went on, however, she began to laugh at his menaces, and he was obliged to resort to trifling physical force. The strong grasp on the wrists had sufficed at first, but it had to be increased as Jenny apparently decided that he would not dare to carry out his threats, and one day he found himself twisting the girl's arm backward in a determined effort to drive off this persistent ghoul-like presence. The idea of injuring Alice came over him so sickeningly that, had not his betrothed at that instant recovered her normal state, he felt that he must have abandoned the field. As it was, he was so unmanned that he could only plead a suddenly remembered professional engagement and get out of the house with the utmost possible speed.

There were other moods which were perhaps even worse. Now and again he was conscious of a strong attraction toward this laughing girl who defied him, looking at him with the eyes of Alice, but brimming them with merriment; who tempted him with Alice's lips, yet ripened them with warm blood and pouted them so bewitchingly; who walked toward him with the form of his betrothed, but swayed that body with a grace and an allurement of which Alice knew nothing. He felt in his nostrils a quiver of desire, and shame and self-scorn came in its wake. Not only did he feel that he had been false to Alice, but by a painful and disconcerting paradox he felt that he was offering to her a degrading insult in being moved by what at least was her body, as he might have been moved by the sensual attractiveness of a light woman. Jenny was at once so distinct, so far removed from Alice, and yet so identified with her, that his emotions confounded themselves in baffling confusion. It was not only that he could not think logically about the matter, but he seemed also to have lost the directing influence of instinctive feeling. Jenny represented nothing ethical, nothing spiritual, not even anything moral. He was filled with disgust at himself for being moved by her, yet humanly his masculine nature could not but respond to her spell; and the impossibility of either separating this from his love for Alice or reconciling it with the respect he had for her left him in a state of mental confusion as painful as it seemed hopeless.

He became so troubled that it was inevitable Alice should notice his uneasiness, and he was not in the least surprised when one evening she said to him:—

"George, what is the matter? Are you worrying about me?"

He had prepared himself over and over to answer such a question, but now he only hesitated and stumbled.

“Why—what makes you think anything is the matter?”

“I know there is; and I’m sure it’s my fainting-spells.”

She had come to speak of her seizures by this term, and George had accepted it, secretly glad that she had no idea worse than that of loss of consciousness.

“Why, of course I am troubled, so long as you are not well, but—”

“You don’t like to tell me what is the matter,” she went on calmly, but with an earnestness which showed she had thought long on the matter. “I dare say I should n’t be any better for knowing, and I can trust you; but I know you are worrying, and it troubles me.”

His resolution was taken at once.

“See here, Alice,” he said, “the truth is that you need to get away from Boston and have an entire change of scene and climate. You used to be a good sailor, and a sea voyage will set you up. I’m going to marry you next week and take you to Italy.”

“Why, George, you can’t!”

“I shall.”

“Even if I were well, I could n’t be ready.”

“Who cares? As to being well, you are going so you may get well. When I order patients to go away for their health, I expect them to go.”

She became serious, and looked at him with eyes of infinite sadness.

“Dear George,” she said, “I can’t marry you just to be a patient. You must n’t go through life encumbered by an invalid wife.”

“I’ve no notion of doing anything of the kind,” he responded brightly. “It would be too poor an advertisement, and that’s the reason I insist on taking you abroad. What day do you choose, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday? We sail Saturday.”

He would listen to no objections, but got Thursday fixed for the wedding, and pushed forward rapidly his preparations for going abroad. He enlisted the coöperation of a cousin of Alice, an efficient lady accustomed to carry everything before her, and, as Abby warmly approved of his decision, he felt that Alice would be ready. He saw Alice but briefly until Sunday evening, when he found her in a state of much agitation.

“I am really out of my mind,” she said. “What do you think I have done?”

“I don’t care, if you have n’t changed your mind about Thursday.”

“I ought to change my mind. Oh, George, I’ve no right—”

“That is settled,” he interrupted decisively. “What have you done that is so dreadful?”

She produced a waist of dove-colored silk.

“Of course I could n’t be married in black, you know, and this was to be my dress. See here.”

The front of the waist was cut and slashed from top to bottom.

“I must have done it some time to-day. Oh, George, it’s dreadful!”

For the first time in all the long, hard trial of their protracted engagement, she broke down and cried bitterly. He took her in his arms and soothed her. He told her he knew all about it, and that she was going to be entirely well; that he asked only that she would not worry, but would trust to him that she would come safely and happily out of all this trouble and mystery. She yielded to his persuasions, and, indeed, it was evident that she had hardly strength to resist him even had she not believed. She rested quietly on his shoulder and let him drift into a description of the route he had laid out, and in her interest she seemed to forget her trouble.

Before he left, she asked him what she could tell the dressmaker, who would suspect if she was given no reason for being called upon to make a new waist. He took the injured garment, went to the writing-table, and splashed ink on the cut portions.

“You showed it to me,” he said gayly, “and I was so incredibly clumsy as to spill ink on it. Men are so stupid.”

She laughed, and he went away feeling that he could gladly have throttled Jenny, could he but succeed in getting her in some other body than that belonging to his betrothed. If he was irritated by this experience, however, he had one to meet later which tried him still more. Abby, on letting him into the house on Tuesday, once more led him mysteriously into the reception-room.

“Miss Alice’s been writing to herself, sir.”

She held toward him a sealed and stamped envelope addressed to Alice. He took it half mechanically, and as he wondered how he was to circumvent this new trick of the

maliciously ingenious Jenny, he noted that the handwriting was strangely different from Alice's usual style.

"Did she give you this to post?" he asked.

"It was with the other letters, and I noticed it and did n't mail it."

"I'll take it," he said. "You did perfectly right."

He wondered whether the prescience of Jenny would enable her to discover that he had destroyed her note to Alice; then he smiled to realize how he was coming to think of her as almost a supernatural demon, and reflected that nothing could be easier than for her to leave a paper where Alice must find it. A couple of days later he found his thought verified when Alice said to him:—

"George, who is Jenny?"

As she spoke, she put into his hand an unsigned note which said only, "George loves Jenny." The instant which was necessarily taken for its examination gave him a chance to steady himself.

"You wrote it yourself," he said quietly. "Don't you recognize your paper and your writing? It's a little strange, but sleep-writing always is."

"Then I am a somnambulist!" she exclaimed, with flushing cheek.

"There is nothing dreadful in that," he replied. "You have promised to trust me about your health. I know all about it, and if you write yourself forty notes, you are not to bother."

She sighed, and then bravely smiled.

"I'll try not to worry," she told him; "but I am a coward not to send you away. I wonder why I should have chosen Jenny as the name of your beloved."

"I'm sure I don't know; it's an ugly name enough," he responded, with a quick thought that he hoped Jenny could hear. "At any rate, I tell you with my whole heart that you are the only woman in the world for me."

He did not see Jenny again until the evening before his marriage. He fancied she was avoiding him, especially as once Alice sent down word that she was too busy to see him. He received, however, a note on Wednesday. The hand, so like that of Alice and yet so unmistakably different, affected him most unpleasantly, nor was he made more at ease by the contents.

“You think you got ahead of me by telling Alice she was a sleep-walker, did n’t you! Well, I don’t care, for I’m going to get rid of her for always when we are married. I did n’t mean to be married in that nasty old gray dress, and I won’t be, either. You see if I am. You are very unkind to me. You might remember that I’m a great deal fonder of you than she is, because I’ve got real feeling and she’s a kind of graven image. You’ll love your little wifie Jenny very dearly.”

Dr. Carroll began to feel as if his own brain were whirling. He could not reply to the note, since he could hardly address a letter to Jenny somewhere inside the personality of Alice. He realized that a strain such as this would soon so tell on him that he would be unfit to care for Alice, and he made up his mind that the time had come for the strongest measures. To tell what the strongest measures were, however, was a problem which occupied him for the rest of the day, and about which he consulted the specialist. Even when, that evening, he walked down West Cedar Street, he could hardly be sure that he would carry out his plan. He was told at the door by Abby that Miss Alice had given strict orders against his being admitted.

“When did she do that?” he inquired.

“This forenoon, sir, when she gave me that note to send to you. She was queer, sir. She had a cab and went down town shopping, and came back with a big box. Then she had a nap, and to-night she’s all right.”

“I’ll go up, Abby. It is necessary for me to see her.”

As he came into the drawing-room Alice sprang up to meet him.

“I began to be afraid you would n’t come,” she said. “I’ve been queer to-day, I know; and there’s a dressmaker’s box in my room I never saw, and it’s marked not to be opened till to-morrow. Oh, George, I am so frightened and miserable! I know I ought to send you away, and not let you marry me.”

“Send me away, by all means, if it will make you feel any better. I shan’t go. Sit down in this chair; I want to show you something.”

She took the seat he indicated. He trimmed the fire and left the poker in the coals. Then from his pocket he took a ball of silvered glass as large as an orange, and began to toss it in his hands. She stared at it in silence for half a minute. Then the unmistakable laugh of Jenny rang out.

“So you really wanted to see me, did you?” she cried. “I knew you would some time.”

“Yes,” was his reply. “You may be sure I wanted to see you pretty badly before I’d take

the risk of doing something that may be bad for Alice.”

“Oh, it’s still Alice, is it?” Jenny responded, pouting. “I hoped you’d got more sense by this time. Honest, now,” she continued, leaning forward persuasively, “don’t you think you’d like me best? The trouble is, you think you’re tied to her, and you don’t dare do what you want to. I’d hate to be such a coward!”

He looked at the beautiful creature bending toward him, and he could not but acknowledge in his heart that she was physically more attractive than Alice, that she stirred in him a fever of the blood which he had never known when with the other. All the attraction which had drawn him to Alice was there, save for certain spiritual qualities, and added was a new charm which he felt keenly. He could not define to himself clearly, moreover, what right or ground he had for objecting to this form of the personality of his betrothed, to this potential Alice, who in certain ways moved him more than the Alice he had known so long. He had only a dogged instinct to guide him, an unescapable inner conviction that the normal consciousness of the girl had inalienable rights which manhood and honor called upon him to defend. In part this was the feeling natural to a physician, but more it was the Puritan loyalty to an idea of justice. The more he felt himself stirred by the fascination of Jenny, the more strongly his sense of right urged him to end, if possible, this frightful possession forever. Both for himself and for Alice, he was resolute now to go to any extreme.

“You are at liberty to put it any way you please,” he responded to her taunt, with grave courtesy. “I called you to tell you that I am going to marry Alice to-morrow, and that I will not have her personality interfered with any more.”

“Oh, you won’t? How are you going to help it?”

He looked at her eyes sparkling with mischievous defiance, at her red lips pouted in saucy insolence, and he wavered. Then in the instant revulsion from this weakness he turned to the fire and took from the coals the glowing poker.

“That is how I mean to help it,” he said.

She shrank and turned pale; but she did not yield.

“You can’t fool me like that,” she said. “You would n’t really hurt the body of that precious Alice of yours. You can’t burn me without her being burned too.”

“She had better be burned than to be under the control of a little devil like you.”

For the moment they faced each other, and then her glance dropped. She fell on her knees with a bitter cry, and held up to him her clasped hands.

“Oh, why can’t you let me stay!” she half sobbed. “Why won’t you give me a chance? You don’t know how good I’ll be! I’ll do every single thing you want me to. I know all your ways as well as she does, and I’ll make you happy. Why should n’t I have as much right to live as she?”

The wail of her pleading almost unmanned him. He felt instinctively that his only chance of carrying through his plan was to refuse to listen. The thought surged into his mind that perhaps she had as much claim to consciousness as Alice; he seemed to be murdering this strange creature kneeling to him with streaming eyes and quivering mouth. He had to turn away so as not to see her.

“I will not listen to you,” he said doggedly. “I will not have you trouble Alice. As sure as there’s a God in heaven, if you come back again when I am with her, I’ll burn you with a hot iron; and I mean to watch her all the time after we are married.”

“If you married me, you’d have to help me against her,” Jenny said, apparently as much to herself as to him.

He made no other answer than to bring the heated iron so near to her cheek that she must have felt its glow. She threw back her head with a cry of fear. Then a look of defiance came over the face, and the red lips took a mocking curve; but in the twinkle of an eye it was Alice who knelt on the rug before him.

The strain of this interview, with the after-necessity of reassuring Alice, left Carroll in a condition little conducive to sleep. All night he revolved in his head the circumstances of this strange case, comforting himself as well as he was able with the hope that at last he had frightened Jenny away for good. He reflected on the Scriptural stories of demoniacal possession, and wondered whether hypnotism might not have played some part in them; he speculated on the future, and now and then found himself wondering what would have come of his choosing Jenny instead of Alice. A haggard bridegroom he looked when Abby opened the door to him the next forenoon, and he grew yet paler when the old servant said to him, with brief pathos,—

“She ’s queer again.”

Carroll set his teeth savagely. He hardly returned the greetings of the few friends assembled in the drawing-room, but went at once to the fireplace, applied a match to the fire laid there, and thrust the poker between the bars of the grate. The clergyman came in, and in another moment the rustle of the bride’s gown was heard from the stairs outside. Then, on the arm of a cousin of the Gaylords, appeared in the doorway a figure in white. The sweat started on Carroll’s forehead. He realized that Jenny was making one more desperate effort to marry him. He remembered her last words of the evening before, and saw that then she must have had this in mind. He looked her straight in the eyes, and then turned to the grate. As he stooped to grasp the poker the

bride stopped, trembled, put her hand to the door-jamb as if for support. Then George, watching, put the iron down and advanced to Alice. What the assembled company might think of his stirring the fire at that moment he did not care. He felt that he had triumphed; and at least it was Alice and not Jenny whom he married.

So far as Carroll can determine, Jenny never again intruded upon Alice’s personality. Renewed health, varied interests, and the ever watchful affection of her husband gave Mrs. Carroll self-poise and fixed her in a normal state. But there is a little daughter, and now and then the father catches his breath, so startlingly into her face and into her manner comes a likeness to Jenny.