glance at the poor sprinkling of people there had decided him. Mr. Ives had a natural aversion to being laughed at, and as he walked back on the darker side of the street he wished heartily that he had stuck to his original Gamaliel-advocacy of no interference, of allowing the Supreme Judge to decide. Such opinions were inevitably just, Mr. Ives was well aware, though not always handed down immediately. If he were to humble the first citizen, Mr. Ives reflected that a better opportunity might present itself. The whistle of the up-train served to strengthen his resolution, for he was reminded thereby that his mill often had occasion to ask favors of the Truro Railroad.

In the meantime it was twenty minutes past eight in the town hall, and Mr. Graves had not rapped for order. Deacon Hartington sat as motionless as a stork on the borders of a glassy lake at sunrise, the judge had begun seriously to estimate the gas bill, and Mr. Page had chewed up the end of a pencil. There was one, at least, in the audience of whom the judge could be sure. A certain old soldier in blue sat uncompromisingly on the front bench with his hands crossed over the head of his stick; but the ladies and gentlemen nearest the door were beginning to vanish, one by one, silently as ghosts, when suddenly the judge sat up. He would have rubbed his eyes, had he been that kind of a man. Four persons had entered the hall — he was sure of it — and with no uncertain steps as if frightened by its emptiness. No, they came boldly. And after them trooped others, and still others were heard in the street beyond, not whispering, but talking in the unmistakable tones of people who had more coming behind them. Yes, and more came. It was no illusion, or delusion: there they were filling the hall as if they meant to stay, and buzzing with excitement. The judge was quivering with excitement now, but he, too, was only a spectator of the drama. And what a drama, with a miracle-play for Brampton!

Mr. Page rose from his chair and leaned over the edge of the platform that something might be whispered in his

ear. The news, whatever it was, was apparently electrifying, and after the first shock he turned to impart it to Mr. Graves; but turned too late, for the judge had already rapped for order and was clearing his throat. He could not account for this extraordinary and unlooked-for audience, among whom he spied many who had thought it wiser not to protest against the dictum of the first citizen, and many who had professed to believe that the teacher's connection with Jethro Bass was a good and sufficient reason for dismissal. The judge was prepared to take advantage of the tide, whatever its cause.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I take the liberty of calling this meeting to order. And before a chairman be elected, I mean to ask your indulgence to explain my purposes in requesting the use of this hall to-night. In our system of government, the inalienable and most precious gift — "

Whatever the gift was, the judge never explained. He paused at the words, and repeated them, and stopped altogether because no one was paying any attention to him. The hall was almost full, the people had risen, with a hum, and as one man had turned toward the door. Mr. Gamaliel Ives was triumphantly marching down the aisle, and with him was — well, another person. Nay, personage would perhaps be the better word.

Let us go back for a moment. There descended from that train of which we have heard the whistle a lady with features of no ordinary moulding, with curls and a string bonnet and a cloak that seemed strangely to harmonize with the lady's character. She had the way of one in authority, and Mr. Sherman himself ran to open the door of his only closed carriage, and the driver galloped off with her all the way to the Brampton House. Once there, the lady seized the pen as a soldier seizes the sword, and wrote her name in most uncompromising characters on the register, *Miss Lucretia Penniman, Boston.* Then she marched up to her room.

Miss Lucretia Penniman, author of the "Hymn to Coniston," in the reflected glory of whose fame Brampton had

shone for thirty years! Whose name was lauded and whose poem was recited at every Fourth of July celebration, that the very children might learn it and honor its composer! Stratford-on-Avon is not prouder of Shakespeare than Brampton of Miss Lucretia, and now she was come back, unheralded, to her birthplace. Mr. Raines, the clerk, looked at the handwriting on the book, and would not believe his own sight until it was vouched for by sundry citizens who had followed the lady from the station — on foot. And then there was a to-do.

Send for Mr. Gamaliel Ives; send for Miss Bruce, the librarian; send for Mr. Page, editor of the *Clarion*, and notify the first citizen. He, indeed, could not be sent for, but had he known of her coming he would undoubtedly have had her met at the portals and presented with the keys in gold. Up and down the street flew the news which overshadowed and blotted out all other, and the poor little school-teacher was forgotten.

One of these notables was at hand, though he did not deserve to be. Mr. Gamaliel Ives sent up his card to Miss Lucretia, and was shown deferentially into the parlor, where he sat mopping his brow and growing hot and cold by turns. How would the celebrity treat him? The celebrity herself answered the question by entering the room in such stately manner as he had expected, to the rustle of the bombazine. Whereupon Mr. Ives bounced out of his chair and bowed, though his body was not formed to bend that way.

"Miss Penniman," he exclaimed, "what an honor for Brampton! And what a pleasure, the greater because so unexpected! How cruel not to have given us warning, and we could have greeted you as your great fame deserves! You could never take time from your great duties to accept the invitations of our literary committee, alas! But now that you are here, you will find a warm welcome, Miss Penniman. How long it has been — thirty years, — you see I know it to a day, thirty years since you left us. Thirty years, I may say, we have kept burning the vestal fire in your worship, hoping for this hour."

Miss Lucretia may have had her own ideas about the propriety of the reference to the vestal fire.

"Gamaliel," she said sharply, "straighten up and don't talk nonsense to me. I've had you on my knee, and I knew your mother and father."

Gamaliel did straighten up, as though Miss Lucretia had applied a lump of ice to the small of his back. So it is when the literary deities, vestal or otherwise, return to their Stratfords. There are generally surprises in store for the people they have had on their knees, and for others.

"Gamaliel," said Miss Lucretia, "I want to see the prudential committee for the village district."

"The prudential committee!" Mr. Ives fairly shrieked the words in his astonishment.

"I tried to speak plainly," said Miss Lucretia. "Who are on that committee?"

"Ezra Graves," said Mr. Ives, as though mechanically compelled, for his head was spinning round. "Ezra Graves always has run it, until now. But he's in the town hall."

"What's he doing there?"

Mr. Ives was no fool. Some inkling of the facts began to shoot through his brain, and he saw his chance.

"He called a mass meeting to protest against the dismissal of a teacher."

"Gamaliel," said Miss Lucretia, "you will conduct me to that meeting. I will get my cloak."

Mr. Ives wasted no time in the interval, and he fairly ran out into the office. Miss Lucretia Penniman was in town, and would attend the mass meeting. Now, indeed, it was to be a mass meeting. Away flew the tidings, broadcast, and people threw off their carpet slippers and dressing gowns, and some who had gone to bed got up again. Mr. Dodd heard it, and changed his shoes three times, and his intentions three times three. Should he go, or should he not? Already he heard in imagination the first distant note of the populace, and he was not of the metal to defend a Bastille or a Louvre for his royal master with the last drop of his blood.

In the meantime Gamaliel Ives was conducting Miss

Lucretia toward the town hall, and speaking in no measured tones of indignation of the cringing, truckling qualities of that very Mr. Dodd. The injustice to Miss Wetherell, which Mr. Ives explained as well as he could, made his blood boil: so he declared.

And now we are back again at the meeting, when the judge, with his hand on his Adam's apple, is pronouncing the word "gift." Mr. Ives is triumphantly marching down the aisle, escorting the celebrity of Brampton to the platform, and quite aware of the heart burnings of his fellow-citizens on the benches. And Miss Lucretia, with that stern composure with which celebrities accept public situations, follows up the steps as of right and takes the chair he assigns her beside the chairman. The judge, still grasping his Adam's apple, stares at the newcomer in amazement, and recognizes her in spite of the years, and trembles. Miss Lucretia Penniman! Blücher was not more welcome to Wellington, or Lafayette to Washington, than was Miss Lucretia to Ezra Graves as he turned his back on the audience and bowed to her deferentially. Then he turned again, cleared his throat once more to collect his senses, and was about to utter the familiar words, "We have with us to-night," when they were taken out of his mouth — taken out of his mouth by one who had in all conscience stolen enough thunder for one man, — Mr. Gamaliel Ives.

"Mr. Chairman," said Mr. Ives, taking a slight dropping of the judge's lower jaw for recognition, "and ladies and gentlemen of Brampton. It is our great good fortune to have with us to-night, most unexpectedly, one of whom Brampton is, and for many years has been, justly proud." (Cheers.) "One whose career Brampton has followed with a mother's eyes and with a mother's heart. One who has chosen a broader field for the exercise of those great powers with which Nature endowed her than Brampton could give. One who has taken her place among the luminaries of literature of her time." (Cheers.) "One who has done more than any other woman of her generation toward the uplifting of the sex which she honors." (Cheers and clapping of hands.) "And one who, though her lot has fallen among the great, has not forgotten the home of her childhood. For has she not written those beautiful lines which we all know by heart?

'Ah, Coniston! Thy lordly form I see
Before mine eyes in exile drear.'

"Mr. Chairman and fellow-townsmen and women, I have the extreme honor of introducing to you one whom we all love and revere, the author of the 'Hymn to Coniston,' the editor of the *Woman's Hour*, Miss Lucretia Penniman." (Loud and long-continued applause.)

Well might Brampton be proud, too, of Gamaliel Ives, president of its literary club, who could make such a speech as this on such short notice. If the truth be told, the literary club had sent Miss Lucretia no less than seven invitations, and this was the speech Mr. Ives had intended to make on those seven occasions. It was unquestionably a neat speech, and Judge Graves or no other chairman should cheat him out of making it. Mr. Ives, with a wave of his hand toward the celebrity, sat down by no means dissatisfied with himself. What did he care how the judge glared. He did not see how stiffly Miss Lucretia sat in her chair. She could not take him on her knee then, but she would have liked to.

Miss Lucretia rose, and stood quite as stiffly as she had sat, and the judge rose, too. He was very angry, but this was not the time to get even with Mr. Ives. As it turned out, he did not need to bother about getting even.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "in the absence of any other chairman I take pleasure in introducing to you Miss Lucretia Penniman."

More applause was started, but Miss Lucretia put a stop to it by the lifting of a hand. Then there was a breathless silence. Then she cast her eyes around the hall, as though daring any one to break that silence, and finally they rested upon Mr. Ives.

"Mr. Chairman," she said, with an inclination toward the judge, "my friends — for I hope you will be my friends when I have finished" (Miss Lucretia made it quite clear

"How stiffly Miss Lucretia sat in her chair."

by her tone that it entirely depended upon them whether they would be or not), "I understood when I came here that this was to be a mass meeting to protest against an injustice, and not a feast of literature and oratory, as Gamaliel Ives seems to suppose."

She paused, and when the first shock of amazement was past an audible titter ran through the audience, and Mr. Ives squirmed visibly.

"Am I right, Mr. Chairman?" asked Miss Lucretia.

"You are unquestionably right, Miss Penniman," answered the chairman, rising, "unquestionably."

"Then I will proceed," said Miss Lucretia. "I wrote the 'Hymn to Coniston' many years ago, when I was younger, and yet it is true that I have always remembered Brampton with kindly feelings. The friends of our youth are dear to us. We look indulgently upon their failings, even as they do on ours. I have scanned the faces here in the hall to-night, and there are some that have not changed beyond recognition in thirty years. Ezra Graves I remember, and it is a pleasure to see him in that chair." (Mr. Graves inclined his head, reverently. None knew how the inner man exulted.) "But there was one who was often in Brampton in those days," Miss Lucretia continued, "whom we all loved and with whom we found no fault, and I confess that when I have thought of Brampton I have oftenest thought of her. Her name," said Miss Lucretia, her hand now in the reticule, "her name was Cynthia Ware."

There was a decided stir among the audience, and many leaned forward to catch every word.

"Even old people may have an ideal," said Miss Lucretia, "and you will forgive me for speaking of mine. Where should I speak of it, if not in this village, among those who knew her and among their children? Cynthia Ware, although she was younger than I, has been my ideal, and is still. She was the daughter of the Rev. Samuel Ware of Coniston, and a descendant of Captain Timothy Prescott, whom General Stark called 'Honest Tim.' She was, to me, all that a woman should be, in intellect, in

her scorn of all that is ignoble and false, and in her loyalty to her friends." Here the handkerchief came out of the reticule. "She went to Boston to teach school, and some time afterward I was offered a position in New York, and I never saw her again. But she married in Boston a man of learning and literary attainments, though his health was feeble and he was poor, William Wetherell." (Another stir.) "Mr. Wetherell was a gentleman — Cynthia Ware could have married no other — and he came of good and honorable people in Portsmouth. Very recently I read a collection of letters which he wrote to the *Newcastle Guardian*, which some of you may know. I did not trust my own judgment as to those letters, but I took them to an author whose name is known wherever English is spoken, but which I will not mention. And the author expressed it as his opinion, in writing to me, that William Wetherell was undoubtedly a genius of a high order, and that he would have been so recognized if life had given him a chance. Mr. Wetherell, after his wife died, was taken in a dying condition to Coniston, where he was forced, in order to earn his living, to become the storekeeper there. But he took his books with him, and found time to write the letters of which I have spoken, and to give his daughter an early education such as few girls have.

"My friends, I am rejoiced to see that the spirit of justice and the sense of right are as strong in Brampton as they used to be — strong enough to fill this town hall to overflowing because a teacher has been wrongly — yes, and iniquitously — dismissed from the lower school." (Here there was a considerable stir, and many wondered whether Miss Lucretia was aware of the irony in her words.) "I say wrongly and iniquitously, because I have had the opportunity in Boston this winter of learning to know and love that teacher. I am not given to exaggeration, my friends, and when I tell you that I know her, that her character is as high and pure as her mother's, I can say no more. I am here to tell you this to-night because I do not believe you know her as I do. During the seventy years

I have lived I have grown to have but little faith in outward demonstration, to believe in deeds and attainments rather than expressions. And as for her fitness to teach, I believe that even the prudential committee could find no fault with that." (I wonder whether Mr. Dodd was in the back of the hall.) "I can find no fault with it. I am constantly called upon to recommend teachers, and I tell you I should have no hesitation in sending Cynthia Wetherell to a high school, young as she is.

"And now, my friends, why was she dismissed? I have heard the facts, though not from her. Cynthia Wetherell does not know that I have come to Brampton, unless somebody has told her, and did not know that I was coming. I have heard the facts, and I find it difficult to believe that so great a wrong could be attempted against a woman, and if the name of Cynthia Wetherell had meant no more to me than the letters in it I should have travelled twice as far as Brampton, old as I am, to do my utmost to right that wrong. I give you my word of honor that I have never been so indignant in my life. I do not come here to stir up enmities among you, and I will mention no more names. I prefer to believe that the prudential committee of this district has made a mistake, the gravity of which they must now realize, and that they will reinstate Cynthia Wetherell to-morrow. And if they should not of their own free will, I have only to look around this meeting to be convinced that they will be compelled to. Compelled to, my friends, by the sense of justice and the righteous indignation of the citizens of Brampton."

Miss Lucretia sat down, her strong face alight with the spirit that was in her. Not the least of the compelling forces in this world is righteous anger, and when it is exercised by a man or a woman whose life has been a continual warfare against the pests of wrong, it is well-nigh irresistible. While you could count five seconds the audience sat silent, and then began such tumult and applause as had never been seen in Brampton — all started, so it is said, by an old soldier in the front row with his stick. Isaac D. Worthington, sitting alone in the library of his mansion, heard it,

and had no need to send for Mr. Flint to ask what it was, or who it was had fired the Third Estate. And Mr. Dodd heard it. He may have been in the hall, but now he sat at home, seeing visions of the lantern, and he would have fled to the palace had he thought to get any sympathy from his sovereign. No, Mr. Dodd did not hold the Bastille or even fight for it. Another and a better man gave up the keys, for heroes are sometimes hidden away in meek and retiring people who wear spectacles and have a stoop to their shoulders. Long before the excitement died away a dozen men were on their feet shouting at the chairman, and among them was the tall, stooping man with spectacles. He did not shout, but Judge Graves saw him and made up his mind that this was the man to speak. The chairman raised his hand and rapped with his gavel, and at length he had obtained silence.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I am going to recognize Mr. Hill of the prudential committee, and ask him to step up on the platform."

There fell another silence, as absolute as the first, when Mr. Hill walked down the aisle and climbed the steps. Indeed, people were stupefied, for the feed dealer was a man who had never opened his mouth in town-meeting; who had never taken an initiative of any kind; who had allowed other men to take advantage of him, and had never resented it. And now he was going to speak. Would he defend the prudential committee, or would he declare for the teacher? Either course, in Mr. Hill's case, required courage, and he had never been credited with any. If Mr. Hill was going to speak at all, he was going to straddle.

He reached the platform, bowed irresolutely to the chairman, and then stood awkwardly with one knee bent, peering at his audience over his glasses. He began without any address whatever.

"I want to say," he began in a low voice, "that I had no intention of coming to this meeting. And I am going to confess — I am going to confess that I was afraid to come." He raised his voice a little defiantly at the words,

and paused. One could almost hear the people breathing. "I was afraid to come for fear that I should do the very thing I am going to do now. And yet I was impelled to come. I want to say that my conscience has not been clear since, as a member of the prudential committee, I gave my consent to the dismissal of Miss Wetherell. I know that I was influenced by personal and selfish considerations which should have had no weight. And after listening to Miss Penniman I take this opportunity to declare, of my own free will, that I will add my vote to that of Judge Graves to reinstate Miss Wetherell."

Mr. Hill bowed slightly, and was about to descend the steps when the chairman, throwing parliamentary dignity to the winds, arose and seized the feed dealer's hand. And the people in the hall almost as one man sprang to their feet and cheered, and some — Ephraim Prescott among these — even waved their hats and shouted Mr. Hill's name. A New England audience does not frequently forget itself, but there were few present who did not understand the heroism of the man's confession, who were not carried away by the simple and dramatic dignity of it. He had no need to mention Mr. Worthington's name, or specify the nature of his obligations to that gentleman. In that hour Jonathan Hill rose high in the respect of Brampton, and some pressed into the aisle to congratulate him on his way back to his seat. Not a few were grateful to him for another reason. He had relieved the meeting of the necessity of taking any further action: of putting their names, for instance, in their enthusiasm to a paper which the first citizen might see.

Judge Graves, whose sense of a climax was acute, rapped for order.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, in a voice not wholly free from emotion, "you will all wish to pay your respects to the famous lady who is with us. I see that the Rev. Mr. Sweet is present, and I suggest that we adjourn, after he has favored us with a prayer."

As the minister came forward, Deacon Hartington dropped his head and began to flutter his eyelids. The

Rev. Mr. Sweet prayed, and so was brought to an end the most exciting meeting ever held in Brampton town hall.

But Miss Lucretia did not like being called "a famous lady."

CHAPTER XVI

MISS LUCRETIA QUOTES GENESIS

WHILE Miss Lucretia was standing, unwillingly enough, listening to the speeches that were poured into her ear by various members of the audience, receiving the incense and myrrh to which so great a celebrity was entitled, the old soldier hobbled away to his little house as fast as his three legs would carry him. Only one event in his life had eclipsed this in happiness — the interview in front of the White House. He rapped on the window with his stick, thereby frightening Cynthia half out of her wits as she sat musing sorrowfully by the fire.

"Cousin Ephraim," she said, taking off his corded hat, "what in the world's the matter with you?"

"You're a schoolmarm again, Cynthy."

"Do you mean to say —?"

"Miss Lucretia Penniman done it."

"Miss Lucretia Penniman!" Cynthia began to think his rheumatism was driving him out of his mind.

"You bet. 'Long toward the openin' of the engagement there wahn't scarcely anybody thar but me, and they was a-goin'. But they come fast enough when they l'arned she was in town, and she blew 'em up higher'n the Petersburg crater. Great Tecumseh, there's a woman! Next to General Grant, I'd sooner shake her hand than anybody's livin'."

"Do you mean to say that Miss Lucretia is in Brampton and spoke at the mass meeting?"

"Spoke!" exclaimed Ephraim, "callate she did — some. Tore 'em all up. They'd a hung Isaac D. Worthington or Levi Dodd if they'd a had 'em thar."