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ain't a bit fatter than Miss Minty.' Now what else could I do but fetch him a box on the ear with Miss Minty a-bursting into tears, and all the others a-grinning?"

Nevertheless she was sorely troubled by the recollection of this one severity. And having it thus brought back she could not help speaking of the tombstone to make up for it in some measure. Then, seeing her listener's deep interest, she became as nearly confiding as her nature would allow. She now learned for the first time that the squire owned the field adjoining the graveyard. There was something too in the talk which led her to hope that he might be induced to move the fence. On the whole she began to take a less gloomy view and her strange face was again wearing its rapt look.

That made old Mrs. Crabtree uneasy and she was relieved to see Phoebe coming.

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LOVE DRAWS WHILE JEALOUSY DRIVES

SHE would have returned even sooner but for trying to see Mrs. Pottle. It seemed a long time since she had consulted that able adviser. Troubles were piling up too — fast and high — and she did not know how to cope with them. It is hard at first to walk alone when we have never been allowed to stand on our own feet, hard enough when the path is clear and Phoebe's was anything but that. Indeed she hardly knew which way to turn and felt that she must ask Mrs. Pottle as she always had done heretofore.

With this in mind she had hurried through her small business at the store and set off for the squire's large white house. But she had gone only a few paces when she caught a glimpse under the trees of Mrs. Pottle's capable back just vanishing beneath Arabella's lilacs.

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The sight had caused her to pause and waver. For a moment she thought of going on and appealing to her friend as though no one else were present. She knew that Arabella did not gossip. Those who are entirely absorbed in their own affairs rarely do. But she was not thinking about that. The doubt which had suddenly sprung up in her mind was whether it would be right to mention Mother Rowan's peculiarities to any one. In another moment it had seemed clearly wrong to speak of them even to Mrs. Pottle. So that she must try to get along without advice. Then, turning hastily, she sped homeward as if running away from temptation. When she saw the two old ladies sitting on the porch her heart gave a leap of alarm. What might not have happened from her leaving them so long together without a buffer!

She was almost afraid to go nearer but there was no visible sign of collision. Nor was there anything unusual in old Mrs. Crabtree's getting up at once to go home. She always did that the moment she ceased to be amused and now strolled off with a good-natured nod. Mother Rowan too was in a better humor.

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Indeed things seemed not nearly so bad as they had half an hour ago. With new cheerfulness Phœbe said that she was ready to help turn the bed round once more, and make every other change in the arrangement of the furniture that Mother Rowan wanted.

"Just as soon as I can lay off my bonnet," she called over her shoulder starting along the porch to the shed-room.

"Back *again!*" Mother Rowan challenged.

Phœbe turned to see the new minister standing on the steps.

"My aunt sends me—or I shouldn't have ventured to come so soon," he said smiling. "She invites both you ladies to run across and see something that she thinks worth seeing."

"I've got something of my own to see to," said Mother Rowan shortly. "And I should think Phœbe had traipsed a-plenty for one day—but if she wants to traipse over yonder—it's no business of mine."

"Oh, no—" said Phœbe hastily and blushing. "Please thank your aunt. I should like to go—but I couldn't possibly. We've been out the whole morning and the house isn't yet in order. I can't leave it to Mother Rowan."

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"Well, I don't see why not," said Mother Rowan huffily. "I've kept house before you were born—in as good a one as this—and bigger too. You needn't be in the least afraid—"

"Please—" protested Phœbe. "Indeed I didn't mean that. Of course you are a much better housekeeper than I am. It was only because there is so much to do—and Father Rowan to take care of—"

"Well, you needn't be afraid of *that* either!" exclaimed Mother Rowan with growing indignation. "I have taken care of him—lo, these many years without having you—or anybody else—to tell me *how*."

Phœbe's brown eyes unconsciously appealed to the new minister. She did not know what to say or do and was already beginning to rely upon his greater strength. But even as she looked at him it came to her again that she should allow no one to interfere with her own task. Moved by a tender impulse she held her soft little hand on the hard old arm.

"Only tell me what you want me to do," she said wistfully. "I will do it as nearly as I can—but I don't know what you mean."

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"Just exactly what I say—and always do," responded Mother Rowan. "If you'll understand that once for all—it'll save you—and me too—a good deal of trouble," and with this she stalked through the front door and out of sight.

Phœbe's lips were quivering and her eyes full of tears. But when she turned and saw that the new minister was smiling she smiled also.

"It's best for you to come—for a little while," he urged. "You can return in a few minutes. Please come, it's much the best," going down the steps and opening the gate.

She followed since there seemed nothing else to do. But she was still too much agitated to know just what she was doing and daintily held up her black skirt a little higher than she intended.

His gaze was quite steady and clear. This was the first opportunity that he had found to look at her as closely and as long as he desired. The full light made her brownness fairer and the flush on her smooth cheeks more exquisite. With the sunlight on her uplifted face her brown eyes were the color of sherry wine and as full of sparkles. The brown of her hair too brightened in the sunshine till it turned into

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red-gold and the moist breeze curled it bewitchingly round the prim brim of her black bonnet. And that absurd veil! Falling nearly to her trim little slippers, it seemed meant to prevent his feeling the thrill that came with every tantalizing glimpse of her snowy petticoat. That enchanting thrill which was lost with the passing of those mysterious white ruffles! For there is never a thrill—not one—in all the prosaic candor of colored silk.

"It's some discovery in nature study that I'm taking you to see," he said gayly as he led the way to the parsonage door.

"And you will knowingly lead me into wrongdoing—after all you've said," she spoke laughing yet with real surprise.

"Oh—only wrong for *me*—not for you."

"How can that be?" She looked up wondering.

"Easily enough. You'll admit that some things *are* right for a man and wrong for a woman—fighting for example."

"Yes," she said readily. Then she blushed vividly, feeling shocked and amazed at herself—as a gentle woman always does when surprised into admitting this opinion which the gentlest woman holds in her secret heart.

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He laughed in open delight: "Well, this is merely the other way round to the same thing. You may safely love Nature while I may not. A sweet woman has plenty of love and sympathy, enough for both Nature and Humanity. She couldn't be narrow and selfish if she tried. But my aunt is calling. Let's go in."

They found Miss Dale busy with a long row of butterflies pinned on the wall. It was a shocking massacre of the innocents and Phœbe could not bear to look at it. But by shutting her eyes to the cruel pins thrust through the frail little bodies, she managed to say something acceptable about the beauty of the lifeless wings. This, however, was not the triumph which she had been summoned to witness. That was upstairs in a small room known as the laboratory, and Miss Dale now led the way up the steep stairs taking a key from her pocket with a look of mystery.

"Of course I keep the door locked," she said gravely. "There are dangerous as well as secret elements of science. I use some arsenic and have to be most cautious," she whispered, throwing open the door.

There was nothing in the room except a

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large table and a small chair. It was strictly a workshop. Several unpleasant-looking instruments were strewn over the table and in the midst of them lay a most strange and gruesome object. Phœbe stared at it in shrinking amazement without knowing at first what it was. Then she saw that it might once have been some wretched little bird. So it was indeed; the victim of an experiment in taxidermy. And apparently Miss Dale's sole idea of the art was to stuff the poor little feathered skin as full as it could hold, quite regardless of its great elasticity.

"Isn't it a fine specimen of an oriole?" she asked, eager for the praise which she thought her success deserved.

"An oriole!" echoed Phœbe blankly.

Could this distorted ball covered with dingy yellow feathers be all that was left of such a radiant, graceful golden creature — a living sunbeam?

"Well, what do you think of my work?" urged Miss Dale rather impatiently. "Isn't it natural? Taxidermy is really wonderful."

"It must be — most wonderful," replied Phœbe quickly, glad to be able to say that much.

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"But you don't say how you like what I've done. Don't you think it quite true to Nature?"

"It seems to me — that is don't *you* think its feathers stick out a little too stiff and straight and far apart?" Phœbe said confusedly.

"Not at all!" said Miss Dale in quick offence. "It's Nature herself. I've studied birds till I know them and I've mastered the fundamental principles of taxidermy. It may be that my methods are my own. I should hate to think they were not, after all the error I've detected in other naturalists."

"I don't know anything about it," Phœbe said still more timidly. "Only I do know the orioles — I've known them all my life." Thinking of these golden friends, who sang so blithely as they built their beautiful air-castles, she sighed.

"Few people *do* know anything about Nature," retorted Miss Dale sharply. "Study amounts to little. One must see and know for one's self, and distrust everything that anybody else may claim to have seen and known. But — since science does not interest you — we may just as well go back downstairs."

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After this unlucky visit Phœbe was ignored by the new minister's aunt. None of us find it easy to forgive a doubt of our doing the things that we cannot do: it is far easier to forgive the doubting of the things that we have done. But the new minister managed to see Phœbe without any one's aid. His first pretext was going to help her when he saw her trying to tie up a branch of honeysuckle that she could not reach. Then there was a rose-bush bending with bloom and needing more strength than she had to support it. By the third day he was bold enough to follow her into the garden, having watched from his window till he saw her among the borders. A hedge came between the garden and the big road, shutting out curious eyes. For two days he helped her pick dainty spice pinks and gather humble vegetables with equal delight.

But it was not to be supposed that Mother Rowan would allow this to go on without vigorous protest. She did not suspect what it meant. Falling in love was naturally the last thought to cross her mind. But she resented what she took to be an intrusion and did not hesitate to say just what she felt. In

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the presence of the intruder she told Phœbe that she never could or would stand having a man always round under foot. Furthermore, she declared that if he had nothing to do—and he should have work if he were any manner of account—he would take himself off and give an industrious woman a chance to do hers. How—she demanded—was any housekeeper to do her duty properly with a man hanging round the house—always under foot—and never giving a body a chance to sweep and dust? No, she repeated, she never had put up with it and never would. When *he* used to hang round the fire—a-smoking his pipe—right after breakfast when there was most to do she would not allow it, and made him go down to the store rain or shine, so that she might at least get a free breath.

But the minister merely laughed and grew more circumspect. It was not long before he learned that Mother Rowan was occupied every evening at a certain hour in getting Father Rowan settled for the night. He was also quick to learn that Phœbe then sat alone on the front porch beneath the vines. Learning this he wanted nothing more—except to

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cross the big road as soon as the kind gloaming floated down. For there was still light enough to see her while the hour was full of twilight's witchery. The scent of the flowers seemed to rise on soft wings and drift through the warm dusk with the silver moth. Beauty, fragrance, and mystery subtly prepared the way for love's lesson. It was not old to him and it was new to her. He had never before learned it thoroughly and she had never learned it at all. But he soon learned it by heart now and saw that she was learning it so too. Yet at the same time he saw that she had made up her mind not to let him know that she knew that he knew. Indeed he understood better than she could have done, just what it was that made her close her eyes to the truth and even to his knowledge of it. These simple scruples which forbade her hearing one word of love — one moment too soon — were very sweet to him. Sometimes he smiled tenderly seeing her smooth down a fold of her mourning, as if needing to remind herself. At such times there was about her something more than ever like a wren: a shy, gentle, brown little house-wren fluttering to reach a

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roof-tree and yet afraid to alight. Feeling this he would have been only too proud to tell everybody how much he loved her. But he could not mention his love just yet without unseemly haste. Then, although he was forbidden to speak of his own love for her he was free to talk about love itself, and after all that is the subtlest way of making love. Moreover, it was a way of making love that she was not on her guard against, and he lost none of the advantage that her inexperience gave him. So that he was able to bide his time and almost content to wait, sitting close beside her hidden behind the flowering vines in the scented dusk lighted only by the fireflies.